

Muslim group says FBI watched it for months

By Jeanne King
Reuters

NEW YORK — A group of fundamentalist Muslims allegedly linked to the World Trade Centre bombing say they have been under intense surveillance by federal authorities since September, months before the current investigation.

The group has denied any involvement in the Feb. 26 bombing that killed five and injured more than 1,000. Their lawyer contends that, given the close surveillance, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) would have known if the group had been planning an attack.

A Brooklyn Muslim activist, who asked that he be identified only as Ahmad, said the investigation centred on members who attended two mosques frequented by Al Sayid Nosair and tied to Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, an Egyptian cleric calling for the overthrow of the Egyptian government.

Mr. Nosair was acquitted of killing radical Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1991 but is serving a prison sentence in connection with other charges stemming from the shooting.

The investigation into the bombing has focused increasingly on the Muslim group and possible ties to the Kahane killing. Authorities are also looking into money transfers from Europe that they believe helped finance the bombing.

Ahmad told Reuters that about 24 people who frequented a mosque in Brooklyn and one in Jersey City, New Jersey, had been subpoenaed last September for questioning over their links to Mr. Nosair and Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

Two of the suspects who have been arrested in connection with the bombing are said to be followers of Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who is facing deportation from the United States.

The first man arrested, Mohammad Salameh, was a worshipper at the Jersey City mosque, while the second, Ibrahim AL Gabrowni, worshipped in Brooklyn. Mr. Gabrowni is also Mr. Nosair's cousin.

Newsweek magazine reports this week that U.S. intelligence officials believe Iran may have been funneling money to Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

Nidal Ayyad, the chemical engineer also being held in the investigation, has ties to Mr. Salameh but authorities have not shown any ties between Mr. Ayyad and the Muslim fundamentalist group.

One of Mr. Nosair's lawyers, Michael Warren, told Reuters that members of the two mosques

were under such close scrutiny that they could not have pulled off the deadly bombing.

"These people have been under intense surveillance by the FBI, the joint task force and the local police department for the last two-and-one-half years," Mr. Warren said in an interview.

"Why didn't authorities know at the inception of the investigation who was responsible for the blast?" Mr. Warren said.

Ahmad said that he and "other Muslim brothers" have been under surveillance "day and night since September," and he also questioned how any of them could have pulled off the crime.

"They have followed us. They have pictures of us coming out of the mosque. We know our telephones are tapped because during the questioning some of us were asked if we recognised a voice on the phone," he said.

FBI spokesman Joe Valiquette had no comment on the Muslims' accounts that they have been under surveillance.

Ahmad said the group was subpoenaed on Sept. 16, 1992, by U.S. attorney Otto Obermeyer in Manhattan. Among them was Mr. Gabrowni, who is now being held without bail in connection with the case.

Ahmad said that five days after the subpoenas he and the others voluntarily spoke with two FBI agents, Steven Vieira and John Anticoff, at their Manhattan headquarters.

Queried for confirmation, Mr. Valiquette said the FBI does not release the names of its agents. "They wanted to know why I visited Nosair in jail and what he talked about. They asked how long I knew him, where I met him, and was it before or after the Kahane shooting," Ahmad said.

He said they also questioned him about Sheikh Abdul Rahman. "They kept referring to him as 'that ex-con,'" he said.

The Sheikh had been in prison in Egypt for political activities. He was cleared of charges that he was involved in the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

Imam Warithu Deen Umar, responsible for Islamic affairs for the New York State Corrections Department, said that he has been warned to stop having contact with Mr. Nosair's family.

He told Reuters he was warned by Correction Department First Deputy Commissioner Philip Combe to "back off and not interfere in the FBI investigation."

He was told that otherwise he "would be investigated as being involved in the conspiracy to blow up the World Trade Centre."



FLASHPOINT: Egyptian security forces guard a church in Qalyoub, 40 kilometres north of Cairo, after protesters set it ablaze, triggering a confrontation with security forces (AFP photo)

Algerian party says officials quit

ALGIERS (R) — More than 500 elected Algerian councillors have resigned in protest after the government offered an amnesty to Muslim fundamentalists, the secular Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) party said.

"As at March 14, 1993, the RCD counted 594 elected members. Out of this figure, 583 councillors have so far submitted their resignations," the party said in a statement late Sunday.

RCD councillors, who controlled one provincial council and 87 local authorities after elections in June 1990, decided to quit 10 days ago after Prime Minister Belaid Abdul Salam offered an amnesty to fundamentalists blamed for more than a year of violence.

Party leader Said Sadi, in a bitter attack two weeks ago, said Mr. Abdul Salam must step down for the good of the country.

"Abdul Salam has made his choice, he is for an Islamic state," said Sadi in a newspaper interview.

The mass resignation coincided with the start of talks between the collective presidency, which appointed Mr. Abdul Salam, and political parties to seek a way out of Algeria's economic and social crisis.

The RCD has not yet said whether it will attend the talks.

Unions call for protest strikes in south Yemen

ADEN, Yemen (R) — Labour unions in southern Yemen Monday called for a general strike and street marches to protest at the government's failure to pay public sector wages for the past three months.

A statement from the labour unions called for a one-day strike Tuesday and urged demonstrators to march to government offices on March 20.

About 4,000 angry employees of seven state-owned factories in the south took to the streets of Aden Sunday to demand wages owed them since January.

Similar protests sparked food riots in the northern part of Yemen last December in which 12 people were killed, but the unrest did not spread to the south.

The new crisis is ill-timed for the government which is preparing for general elections in April, the first in Yemen since the north and the south merged in 1990.

Government employees in southern Yemen, including the armed forces, police and teachers, say they have not been paid for three months because the central bank complains it has no cash.

On Saturday, the Cooperative and Agricultural Credit Bank closed its branch in the southern province of Abyan, saying it could not get cash from the central bank.

Central Bank Deputy Governor Abdul Aziz Basudan told Reuters in Aden the bank's branch had received money from Sanaa and would start paying wages soon.

He refused to reveal the reason for the cash shortage. Residents reported daily queues formed by people struggling to withdraw their money from banks in many parts of southern Yemen. Many institutions were no longer depositing their daily earnings in banks for lack of confidence.

The union statement blamed the crisis on the government and urged it to take quick measures to "curb the insane rise in prices, solve the public sector problem by providing cash to pay public sector employees including the armed forces and police."

It also demanded action to deal with high unemployment. The statement said the crisis was partly due to the government's policy of centralising decisions in the north since the merger and the erosion of the powers of local authorities.

The London-based Al Hayat newspaper Monday said members of the armed forces had recently issued an appeal to the government to pay their wages or face "dire consequences."

There was no independent confirmation of the paper's report.

One year on, no new clues in Israeli embassy bombing

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Though nearly one year after a car bomb razed the Israeli embassy and killed 29 people, no new clues have emerged as to who carried out the attack, but the Argentine foreign minister said Sunday the investigation would continue.

Foreign Minister Guido di Tella, in response to a local newspaper's report the supreme court was about to drop its investigation, said the case would not be closed.

"The case will continue open because one can never rule out that new evidence will turn up," he told reporters at La Tablada cemetery.

Mr. Di Tella and Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Shefi, speaking after a ceremony at a Jewish cemetery in memory of the victims of the March 17, 1992, bombing.

Along with local Jewish community leaders and about 500 people, they attended the ceremony to witness the unveiling of a monument in memory of the fallen in the bombing attack.

Another ceremony of remembrance will be held Wednesday on the site where the Israeli embassy once stood in an elegant neighbourhood in central Buenos Aires.

In the investigation, worked on by specialists from seven different countries, it was discovered the bomb was placed in a pick-up truck parked right in front of the embassy just before it blasted the building.

Turkey cautious on reported PKK offer

ANKARA (R) — Turkish leaders voiced caution about a reported Kurdish offer to halt violence in the southeast where officials said Monday five soldiers died in an ambush.

Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel, responding to reports that the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) leader was ready to abandon his military struggle for a separate Kurdish state, said he would not reject a genuine peace initiative out of hand.

"If they are renouncing terrorism, this is not something Turkey would reject out of hand," the English-language Turkish Daily News quoted Mr. Demirel as saying.

"If those who are disrupting peace say they will no longer disrupt it...of course this is something Turkey will not brush aside," he told the daily.

But he said there was no hard evidence that the PKK was really abandoning its nine-year-old guerrilla war, in which about 5,500 rebels, troops and civilians have been killed.

"First must come the appeal. Then there should be signs — the putting into practice of a ceasefire for example," he said.

Violence flared again in the southeast Sunday when PKK fighters ambushed a patrol in Mardin province, killing five soldiers and wounding eight others, officials said Monday.

Word of a possible change in policy by PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan surfaced Saturday when Iraqi Kurdish officials said Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Jalal Talabani had written to Turkish leaders about his recent talks with Mr. Ocalan.

Mr. Talabani's letter said Mr. Ocalan was declaring his willingness to abandon violence in favour of peaceful negotiations and give up his claim to an independent Kurdish state in the southeast.

President Turgut Ozal, one of the recipients of Mr. Talabani's letter, also said he was taking it cautiously.

"We must wait...there is not much room for over-optimism. Reports from the region do not confirm this," he was quoted by the mass-circulation Hurriyet newspaper as saying.

He said Mr. Ocalan himself should announce his intentions. "He will have committed himself when he speaks," Ozal said.

Mr. Ocalan has asked Turkish and Western journalists to meet him this week before the March 21 start of Nowruz, the Kurdish new year. Clashes over the Nowruz period last year killed about 100 people, most of them civilians.

Mr. Demirel said Mr. Ocalan might meet dissent from PKK hardliners if he tried to move towards a peaceful settlement.

"In the organisation, there will be people who will not go along with this. But it is important that this person (Ocalan) says 'I'm ending it,'" Hurriyet quoted Mr. Demirel as saying.

Hurriyet said Mr. Ocalan's brother Osman, Cemil Bayik, chief of the PKK's military wing, and Semdin Sakik, said to command about 1,000 guerrillas, might defy any call to lay down arms.

Osman Ocalan heads some 1,400 PKK fighters in a remote camp controlled by Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq.

Malta rejects U.S. criticism

VALLETTA, Malta (AP) — Malta has strongly rejected U.S. condemnation of its releasing an Arab imprisoned for fatally shooting an American woman in a 1985 plane hijacking that resulted in 60 deaths.

The government Friday "strongly and emphatically" rejected "the contents and implications" of a congressional subcommittee resolution that criticised the tiny Mediterranean island for the release of Mohammad Ali Rezaq.

The panel said President Bill Clinton should review U.S. relations with Malta. It said Mr. Rezaq, a Lebanese-born Palestinian, was to have been released in 1996.

The State Department also expressed anger at Rezaq's release, saying Malta had failed to answer properly U.S. requests to keep him in jail or turn him over for trial in the United States.

Rezaq received a 25 year sentence for the Nov. 23, 1985, hijacking of an Egypt Air flight, which had been diverted to Malta. Sixty people from 12 countries were killed in the hijacking and storming of the plane by Egyptian commandos.

Rezaq was convicted of killing Scarlett Rogenkamp of Ocean side, California, who, with four other passengers, was shot in the head. Rezaq served seven years and flew to Ghana on Feb. 25.

A resolution endorsed by the House Foreign of Representatives Affairs Sub-Committee on international security called Rezaq a suspected member of the Abu Nidal organisation. It said Malta had assured the United States in September that he would remain in prison until 1996, and that other countries had asked Malta to hold him.

Malta said Rezaq benefited only from standard reductions for good behaviour and "certain amnesties of a general non-discriminatory nature."

Babel says Mubarak repressing his people

BAGHDAD (R) — An Iraqi newspaper said Monday Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was waging a campaign of repression and ruling his country with an iron fist.

"President Hosni Mubarak has put the Egyptian people in the dock and his interior minister has declared an all-out confrontation," said Babel, the newspaper published by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, in a front-page editorial.

On Saturday, Babel urged Egyptians to overthrow Mr. Mubarak, hours after the arrival of a senior Egyptian diplomat in Baghdad to reopen the Egyptian mission.

"For months Cairo has lived in a state of constant military and security siege," Babel said. "Its quarters are subject to curfews, combing and search operations."

Baghdad newspapers sympathise with militants who want to overthrow Mr. Mubarak's government and set up an Islamic state.

"Angry student demonstrations took place south of Cairo, denouncing the regime's oppressive measures and demanding an end to its arbitrary practices," said the government newspaper Al Jumhuriyah Monday.

Egyptian police arrested 58 people at the weekend who took part in student protests. Security forces are on the alert for reprisals by Muslim fundamentalists crushed in raids last week which killed 23 people.

Egypt was a pillar of the U.S.-led coalition that ejected Iraqi troops from Kuwait in 1991.

Cairo has said its diplomat is being sent to improve services to the 100,000 Egyptians in Iraq and there are no plans to raise the level of contacts with the government.

Egyptian demonstrators threw stones at police Saturday and tried to burn the guesthouse of a Christian church in what began as protests against the punishment

of a teacher and four girl students for allegedly playing anti-Christian tapes.

As police in the town of Qalyoub made their arrests, security forces throughout the country remained on alert.

It was Egypt's bloodiest crackdown on Muslim militants for a decade.

The unrest and violence has dealt a severe blow to tourism and the government estimates the industry has lost \$700 million because of the attacks.

In Alexandria, Egypt's second biggest city, police said they had stepped up undercover surveillance on areas known as militant hide-outs — the sprawling slums on the edge of the Mediterranean port.

In Upper Egypt, security sources said arrests of suspected militants continued daily. Cairo's state-owned newspapers said police also carried out a series of raids in the capital.

Residents in Qalyoub said the protests showed signs of being carefully planned.

Organisers distributed leaflets calling for a demonstration last Monday and then sent messengers round the town to postpone it at the last minute when it became clear large numbers of police were ready and waiting.

In an attempt to defuse inflamed feelings, Education Minister Hussein Kamel Bahaeddin reversed his earlier decision to suspend the four girls.

Officials expressed confidence after last week's police raids, which included a strike Tuesday on a mosque that killed nine people, that a new policy of showing no mercy to Muslim militants fighting the government would bear quick results.

Militants have so far avoided open confrontation. When police ringed the mosque in the southern town of Aswan before prayers Friday, daring the militants to strike back, no-one showed up.

Iran to turn mosques into makeshift cinemas

By Mohammad Zargham
Reuters

NICOSIA — Iran, facing an acute shortage of movie houses and a huge public interest in illegal video films, is turning some of its mosques into makeshift cinemas.

Minister of Islamic Culture and Guidance Ali Larijani, quoted by Iranian Television, said Saturday mosques can apply for permits to show authorised video films for the public from the start of the new Iranian year on March 21.

The measure, risking criticism by traditionalist clerics who frowned on previous schemes using Iran's estimated 80,000 mosques as centres for ration-card registration or military recruitment, underlines the importance the government attaches to fighting what it terms a Western "cultural offensive."

Iran's Islamic leaders have

so far failed in their battle to lure back people from watching what they consider as morally corrupting films on videotape.

Western-made movies, music videos and pornographic films are easily available in Iran from underground rental networks.

Owning a videocassette recorder is illegal for private citizens but newspapers estimate households own up to two million sets in the country of 60 million people.

"Video has turned into one of the principal means of spreading decadence and moral corruption," supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in December.

He ordered cultural officials to consider a long-term plan to "protect the people, especially the youth, from this all-threatening danger."

The campaign has become more urgent with the intro-

duction of dish-antenna receivers smuggled into Iran which provide unhindered access to a rising number of satellite television stations beaming un-Islamic programmes.

Mr. Larijani said reproduction, sale and rental of videotapes required a permit from a film review committee at his ministry.

The remark appeared to open the door to legalised video rental shops, although it did not make clear the crucial question whether the committee would use less stringent criteria in vetting films than those applied to the big screen.

The head of state television, Mohammad Hashemi, said last month the authority was considering plans to reproduce some of the films in its substantial archives on videotapes for rental.

The number of cinemas in Iran has declined from 400

before the 1979 Islamic revolution to 270, officials say. Some were burned down during the revolution as symbols of corruption, others were lost to decay and bad management.

But now officials are turning back to cinemas because it is a more controllable form of mass entertainment than videos or satellite television.

"Movie houses have become much more important than before because our people are no longer immune from the blight of satellites at home," Hojjatollah Zam, the cleric head of the artistic department of the Islamic Publicity Organisation, said in a speech quoted by Tehran's film magazine.

"The cinema would be their best haven, so increasing the number of movie houses must be considered a national strategy," he said.

He said he had submitted a plan to President Akbar

Hashemi Rafsanjani for building 500 low-cost video movie houses around the country in five years using bank credits.

Sex and most scenes of violence are banned from authorised movies in Iran. The Islamic dress code enforced for women in Iran is not applied as strictly in censoring foreign movies but not scenes which are not considered sexually explicit in the West, like kissing, are also cut.

This makes them unattractive to many people, like much of the domestic television production which is often dismissed as dull and boring.

A cartoon in a recent issue of Iran's popular satirical weekly Gol Agah showed Mr. Hashemi of the state television hawking his wares at a video shop: "Blank tapes 8,000 rials apiece, Iranian made television serials 4,000 rials."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
18:00 Michael Vailant
18:30 Territoires
19:00 News in French
19:15 Kargo
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 The Powers that Be
21:10 The Dynasty
22:00 News in English
22:30 Big Man

PRAYER TIMES

04:25 Fair
05:42 (Sunrise) Doha
11:45 Dhuhur
15:09 'Asr
17:47 Maghrib
19:04 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweidat, Tel. S10740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 63778
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637430

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 63541

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 71131
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 715261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 717751
Armenian International Church Tel. 623208
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 623824, 654932
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691
Church of the Redeemer Tel. 638526

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be partly cloudy and relatively cold and winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman 3/11
Aqaba 9/19
Deserts 0/13

Jordan Valley 5/19

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 10, Aqaba 20. Humidity readings: Amman 54 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mohammed Al Nabawi 693925
Dr. Khalid Ma'di 743500
Dr. Ghazi Abu Shaikha 752405
Dr. Adnan Al Zughoul 881480
Firas pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 664164
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shoukani pharmacy 657660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

EBER:
Dr. Ali Al Shouqari
Alquds pharmacy

ZARQA:
Dr. Musa Odeh
Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 691228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 635211
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 623101
Abdell Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power
Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Quecui Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/22
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amm 642816
Alshikh Maternity, J. Amm 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 6641714
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musashir Hospital 6672779
The Islamic, Abdali 66612757
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Mahajra 7770103
Al-Sadr, J. Ashrafieh 7711126
Army, Marfa 891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 666100
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital (09)990990
EBER:
Firas Bussan Hospital (02)755555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)7225
Ibn Al Nafisa Hospital (02)47100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

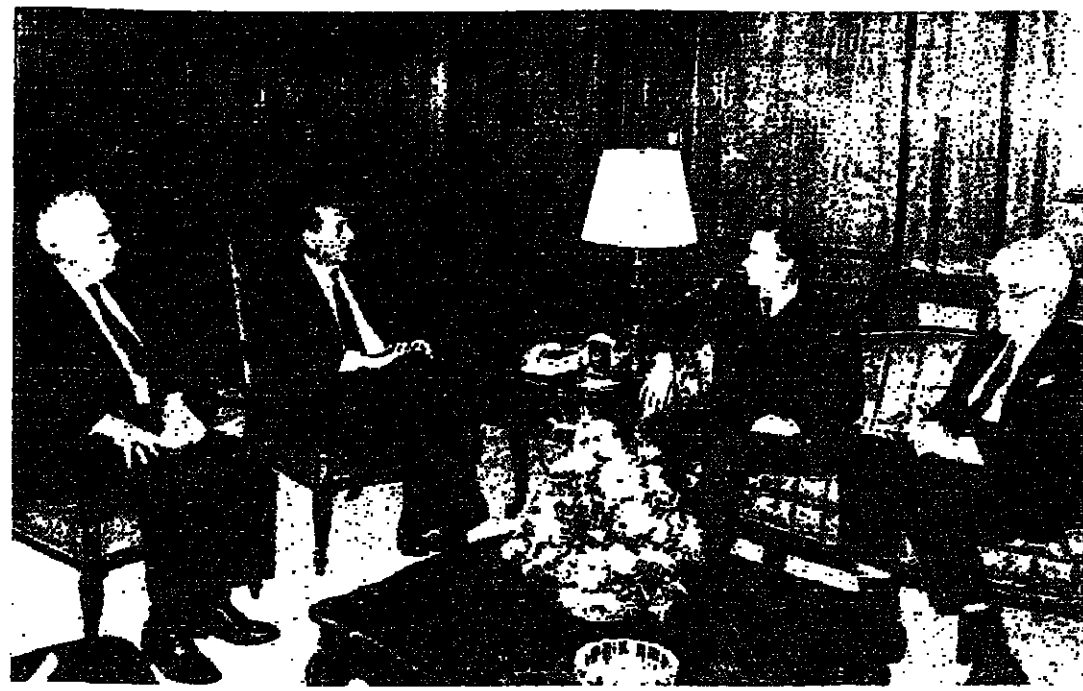
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information Department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:30 Jeddah, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:30 Beirut (ME)
09:15 Amman (RJ)
09:30 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (RJ)



Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday meets with Assistant Under Secretary of the British Foreign Office for Middle Eastern Affairs Michael Burton (second from right) (Petra photo)

Sharif Zeid discusses region with visiting British envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday received Assistant Under Secretary of the British Foreign Office for Middle Eastern Affairs Michael Burton and reviewed with him bilateral relations.

Sharif Zeid and Mr. Burton also reviewed the latest developments in the region, including the Middle East peace process and the obstacles facing it.

The role of Jordan and Britain in achieving a just and comprehensive settlement based on the United Nations resolutions and principles of international legitimacy was also reviewed.

Both sides agreed that the expellees crisis poses an obstacle to the peace process and emphasized the need to solve it in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 799.

In a press statement following the meeting, Mr. Burton said his talks with Sharif Zeid and senior Jordanian officials were excellent.

Such talks, he said, help the British government to better understand the Jordanian position towards all issues of interest to this region.

He added that the positions of Jordan and Britain towards such topics are similar to a great extent.

Mr. Burton voiced hope that end to the expellees crisis would be reached soon, saying that some progress has been made.

An Islamist and a secularist debate the women's rights issue

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Independent Islamists and secularist activists were unanimous Sunday over the need to exert more efforts towards achieving social justice, and expressed "common concern" over the violation of women's rights in the Arab countries; but they differed over the terms and means to achieve this end.

"Would religion be of any profit to our people if it failed to achieve justice between them?" questioned Islamist Deputy Leith Shbeilat at a seminar held at the University of Jordan, organised by Amnesty International — Jordan branch.

"If we forced a woman out (of her job) to replace her by a man, it will not be considered as an aggression upon humanity but an aggression upon the divine power (Allah) itself," he said.

Jordanian researcher and writer Suhair Al Tal explained to the audience, of which students comprised the majority, the different kinds of violations of women's rights in the country, concentrating mainly upon the effect of the traditional mentality on women, propped up by "discriminating laws."

"Over 60 per cent of the employees at the Ministry of Education are women; however, the percentage of those (women) who attained senior posts does not exceed 12 per cent," Ms. Al Tal said.

"We (the society) prefer to ignore these practices. Not only that, but we keep reiterating instead, that there is no discrimination against women."

While Ms. Al Tal considered the need to abolish all kinds of discrimination against women as highly important — partially by raising public awareness and partially by abiding by international charters and agreements — Deputy Shbeilat viewed her point as concentrating on a "specific issue" instead of working for "the general cause."

Mr. Shbeilat questioned: "Have we really come to the stage where human rights are protected to demand women's rights?" "I don't claim that women are not suppressed," he continued. "However, we have to realise that all the notions and slogans promoted by the United Nations, that we innocently take as notions of liberty and freedom, are but mere tools used to serve their interests... and whoever deviates from the planned path designed for him is going to be outcast."

Rejecting what he termed as deceitful slogans, Mr. Shbeilat warned of "double standards used by the West and the dangers that would befall under developed societies if they followed them."

"One might say why don't we accept the principles and slogans that correspond to our aspirations and ambitions... we say that we will accept them when they originate from a civilisation based upon humanitarian not discriminatory principles and have respect for the individual, regardless of his colour, religion, race or sex."

Not only did Ms. Al Tal voice disapproval of Mr. Shbeilat's interpretations of the human rights principles declared and promoted by the West, but so did some members of the audience. One participant accused Mr. Shbeilat of being "a rejectionist of human rights."

"If I am not an advocate of human rights...?" Mr. Shbeilat answered then paused dramatically.

Queen inaugurates local costume exhibit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday inaugurated an exhibition of Jordanian and Palestinian costumes, from the collection of Mrs. Widad Kawar, at the French Cultural Centre.

On display at "The Memory of Silk" exhibition are 30 Jordanian and Palestinian costumes as well as shawls, carpets, pottery and copperware.

The Queen was received by Mr. Denis Bauchard, France's ambassador to Amman, Mr. Noel Farreliere, the director of the French Cultural Centre, and Mrs. Kawar.

Accompanying Her Majesty were Her Royal Highness Princess Ghida Talal and Her Highness Princess Wijdan Ali.

Invited to the inauguration were various ambassadors and their spouses, as well as some heads of U.N. organisations and cultural centres.

UNRWA funding gap could mean reduced services to refugees

VIENNA (UNRWA) — UNRWA may soon be forced to reduce its services to Palestine refugees if it does not receive additional contributions to cover the projected 1993 budget deficit.

Commissioner-General Ifer Turkmen announced yesterday at an extraordinary meeting of the Agency's Advisory Commission which met to discuss a funding appeal issued by UNRWA on Feb. 25.

During the meeting, the Commissioner-General emphasised that UNRWA's financial crisis coincides with growing demands on agency services, particularly in Lebanon and the occupied territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The increase in violence and rapidly worsening socio-economic conditions in the occupied territory are comparable to the initial period of the intifada, and consequently the need for UNRWA programmes is as great as ever," Mr. Turkmen observed.

In Lebanon, where it is estimated that 60 per cent of Palestinian families live below the poverty line, 30,000 refugees remain homeless after years of war.

UNRWA faces a shortfall of some \$28.5 million in its regular and emergency programmes which provide basic education, primary health care and relief and social services to cover 2.7 million Palestine refugees.

The 10-member Advisory Commission supported Commissioner-General Turkmen's appeal for funds.

Chairman of the Advisory Commission Ambassador Mareel Tremereau of France, stated that UNRWA was of particular importance to the United Nations system, and that the Palestine problem was not only a political problem but a human one as well.

He expressed the hope that the shortfall could be reduced and emphasised the need to avoid carrying the deficit forward into future years.

Participants were cautious in their assessment of the prospects for obtaining additional contributions in light of the financial circumstances faced by many countries.

The Advisory Commission stressed the importance of UNRWA's efforts to expand its donor base, particularly through the Commissioner-General's recent visits to several Gulf countries, whose combined contributions currently account for about 1.5 per cent of the agency's total income.

Arab members of the Advisory Commission cautioned against any reduction in services and encouraged the agency to place the problem of its deficit before the international community.

The Commissioner-General explained that the 1993 funding gap was caused by factors beyond the agency's control, including a high rate of growth in the refugee population, reduced donor aid budgets, substantial losses to UNRWA due to currency fluctuations, and a decline in donor interest in UNRWA's emergency programmes in Lebanon and the occupied territories, despite continued emergency conditions in these areas.

He said the section was headed by Mohammad Injast and had six editors and translators.

The English-language transmission assumed an added importance during the Gulf crisis, when hundreds of foreign journalists descended on Jordan to cover news from Iraq and one of their main sources was reports in the local Arabic-language newspapers.

Petra is the only source for news related to official events such as meetings between high-level officials and visiting delegations and formal statements on Jordanian policy.

In addition to such reports, Petra also used to translate most Arabic-language items in the local papers into English and include them in its transmissions with attribution to the source.

The new arrangement replaces the daily bulletins — copies of one-hour transmissions in the morning and evening — which were mostly targeted at foreign diplomatic missions and some U.N. offices in Amman.

Petra did not have a delivery service for the bulletins; interested parties could pick up a copy free of charge from the agency's offices near the Fourth Circle.

In addition, copies are also sent to the Jordan Information Bureau in Washington and London, as well as the Kingdorn embassies abroad.

Over 16 Jordanian diploma missions abroad have satellite links with the Petra transmission. Jamil Nashash, an engineer the technical department of Petra, said subscribers would have to install a new connection printer under the new arrangement since the frequency of the English transmission was different from that of Arabic.

Under the earlier arrangement subscribers with bilingual printers could receive the English text from the same machine if they switched to English at the first timings; 11 a.m. to noon and p.m. to 9 p.m. in summer, 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in winter.

No detail was immediately available of the commercial terms of the new service; whether Petra had enough pay-subscribers to justify the cost involved.



Minister of Finance Basel Jaraneh (third from right) and U.S. Charge D'Affaires in Jordan Douglas Keene Monday sign a \$30 million loan agreement to help Jordan purchase American wheat (Petra photo)

Jordan, U.S. sign \$30m loan agreement to buy American wheat

AMMAN (USIS) — A loan agreement for \$30 million to help Jordan purchase about 20,000 metric tonnes of wheat from private U.S. sources was signed yesterday by Minister of Finance Basel Jaraneh and U.S. Charge D'Affaires in Jordan Douglas Keene.

The soft financial loan is being provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It is being extended at the soft interest rate of 2 per cent for the first seven years, and at 3 per cent thereafter.

Re-payment will begin following a grace period of 7 years in 24 annual instalments.

Official News Agency, Petra, renews English broadcasts

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The official Jordan News Agency, Petra, Monday began regular transmissions of its reports in English cancelling daily English-language bulletins transmitted at fixed timings in the mornings and evenings.

"We will be carrying important news items in English immediately after they are transmitted in Arabic," said Ali Smadi, who works at the English-language department at Petra.

Mr. Smadi said the service would focus on "significant developments such as visits and talks of delegations, the activities of His Majesty the King, agreements between Jordan and other countries and economic news items."

He said the section was headed by Mohammad Injast and had six editors and translators.

The English-language transmission assumed an added importance during the Gulf crisis, when hundreds of foreign journalists descended on Jordan to cover news from Iraq and one of their main sources was reports in the local Arabic-language newspapers.

Petra is the only source for news related to official events such as meetings between high-level officials and visiting delegations and formal statements on Jordanian policy.

In addition to such reports, Petra also used to translate most Arabic-language items in the local papers into English and include them in its transmissions with attribution to the source.

The new arrangement replaces the daily bulletins — copies of one-hour transmissions in the morning and evening — which were mostly targeted at foreign diplomatic missions and some U.N. offices in Amman.

Petra did not have a delivery service for the bulletins; interested parties could pick up a copy free of charge from the agency's offices near the Fourth Circle.

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Jordan celebrates Arab City Day

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan Monday celebrated Arab City Day, which was declared by the Organisation of Arab Cities (OAC).

Greater Amman Mayor Mohammad Bashir Amin made a statement on the occasion, stressing Jordan's interest in protecting the environment, reclaiming land and expanding the area of green land.

Mr. Bashir said Jordan's celebration of this occasion, under the theme "Development for Addressing Environmental and Construction Issues," reflects its true belonging to the great Arab homeland, and embodies Jordan's moral commitment to achieve the slogans raised.

He said Jordan announced in early 1992, its national strategy for the protection of the environment and embarked on practical steps to implement it.

Such steps, he said, include the introduction of environmental education in the education curricula, enacting a law on the protection of the environment and land reform, provisions for proper sanitation, control of air and water pollution and urban development.

Mr. Bashir maintained that Jordan made great efforts to protect its natural environment, despite difficult circumstances.

He said that although successive wars in the region over the last four decades and the forcible massive emigration to Jordan as a result of the Gulf crisis have had direct negative consequences on the Kingdom, Jordan has been able to overcome the difficulties and obstacles facing its development efforts.

To celebrate the occasion, the Greater Amman Municipality Monday mounted intensive clean-up campaigns in all areas and hoisted Jordanian flags and banners with words that highlight the importance of this event.

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A poster entitled "Finally Man Has Controlled Nature" drawn by Intilaq Mohammad Ali (Photo by Walter Ridel)



A poster entitled "The World is Your Only Home... So Take Care Of It" drawn by Bishara Najjar (Photo by Walter Ridel)

Environmentalists to honour poster competition winners

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian Society for the Control of Environmental Pollution will host a reception on March 21 to honour participants in a poster drawing competition announced in late 1992 to promote environmental awareness.

A total of 30 participants took part in the competition, which was organised by the society in cooperation with the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

The winners were Intilaq Mohammad Ali from Iraq, who won JD 150 and Bishara Najjar who won JD 100.

The third prize was shared by Rana Laham and Jalal Ureiqat who won JD 50 each.

The society will present prizes to the winners and meritorious awards to all participants.

Winning entries will be printed in poster forms and will be used by the society for promoting environmental awareness.

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UNDER THE PAIRONAGE OF H. R. H. PRINCE RAAD ZEID



THE AL-HUSSAIN SOCIETY For The Rehabilitation Of The Physically Handicapped PRESENTS Chelou Constantinou Rada C. Nashed IN A DUET PIANO RECITAL AT THE ROYAL CULTURAL CENTRE On Thursday 18th of March 1993 at 8.30 p.m. Tickets are J.D. 7 and are now available at the Royal Cultural Centre, Tel. 661026 At Hussein Society Tel. 817613

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

King hosts Iftar for journalists, academicians
AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday hosted an Iftar banquet in honour of journalists, artists, university presidents, academicians, and scientific societies. The banquet was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Ali and Prince Hamzeh, the King's Military Secretary His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief Khaled Al Karaki, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, and the King's Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayeef. The banquet was also attended by Higher Education Minister Awad Khleifat, Information Minister Mahmoud Al Sharif and Minister of Culture Mahmoud Al Samra. King Hussein and the guests performed Al Maghreb prayers together.

Crown Prince condole Khreisat family
AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday delegated the governor of Balqa to convey his condolences to the Khreisat family on the death of Kayed Saleh Khreisat.

Princess Alia inspects voluntary societies in Karak
KARAK (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein, the Honorary President of the Rural Women Development and Rehabilitation Society, Monday inspected conditions of voluntary societies in the villages of Majarra, Taybeh and Irak in Karak governorate and was briefed about the services offered by these societies. Princess Alia met with heads of local councils who reviewed services needed, particularly in areas of maternal and child care.

House unable to meet, lack of quorum
AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament did not meet Monday as scheduled because of lack of quorum. Only 52 deputies were in attendance; two less than the legal quorum.

Jordan Times

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The View From Fourth Circle

Cute old men in new political guises

By Rami G. Khouri

NOW THAT we have 15 "political parties" and several on the way, and as the autumn 1993 parliamentary elections seem certain to take place as scheduled, the domestic political scene in Jordan will become both more lively and more important. More lively because the "political parties" should generate a marketplace of ideas from which voters can choose, and more important because of the example of pluralism that Jordan may set for the rest of the Arab World.

Many people in Jordan, justifiably pleased with themselves, have a tendency to exaggerate the nature and depth of our brand of democracy. We are not yet a pace-setting democracy. The facts are clear. We are in the very early stages of political liberalisation based on principles of democratic pluralism. Our intention and direction are impressive, but our performance is still in its very early days.

The last three years have been relatively easy, but superficial. The balance sheet of our progress is positive in its overall qualitative direction, but inconsistent in its substance: we have a part-time Parliament that is partly manned by part-time parliamentarians elected by part of our population; and our "political parties" at this stage are little more than mini-patriarchies, regional sheikhdoms, tribal allegiances, and personality cults reconfigured for the new look of democratic pluralism. A good start, but only a start so far.

Some of the new "political parties" may develop into genuine parties in time, sustained by collective commitments to ideologies and programmes, rather than allegiance to personalities or the promise of personal gain. Some parties will disappear or merge with others, and new ones will be born.

Already we have fragmentation and realignments among some of the parties whose founders were upset with the way some party members were behaving. In one party, many of the original founders resigned en masse and may start another party; unhappy with the way things turned out when they found themselves outmanoeuvred by others in their own party, they took their ball and went home.

As I said, these are early days. Some people may criticise this as childish and immature behaviour. I do not think so. In fact, it is absolutely consistent with the behaviour we would expect from a tribal, traditional, patriarchal, and ancient Semitic political culture that is subjected to the alien stresses of formalised democratic pluralism.

People changing from the old rules of governance and power to the new ones will not shed their old habits very easily. They will speak in the vocabulary of the new world and the modern age, but they will act according to their former ways. They will speak of the future, but act like the past. Whether in Chicago, Moscow or Amman, it is normal for the old men and the old rules to seek to preserve their hold on power by asserting themselves in a different guise. Most of our political parties in Jordan today fall

into this category — and we should not expect anything very different for the time being.

One of the most important things that should happen in the coming half a year, as the parties establish themselves and offer voters a range of ideological programmes and practical promises, is a redistribution of political allegiance among the electorate. The existing Parliament was elected when the Muslim Brotherhood and its independent Islamist colleagues were the only well organised political group that was allowed to function legally. The Islamists, therefore, have about 40 per cent of the seats in the present Lower House of Parliament; the big question in many people's minds is whether or not they will increase this share in the 1993 elections.

With the advent of pluralism and the establishment of other secular political parties, people wishing to express themselves politically now have options which they did not enjoy previously. Pan-Arab, leftist, pro-government, monarchist, tribal, and non-ideological technocratic parties should capture a significant chunk of the vote that Islamists won in the 1989 elections.

"The last three years have been relatively easy, but superficial. The balance sheet of our progress is positive in its overall qualitative direction, but inconsistent in its substance ..."

A key force that will come into play in domestic Jordanian politics this year is one that has been missing from the scene for about, oh, one thousand years: the principle of public accountability.

The parliamentarians now in power were voted in on a variety of slogans, programmes, and promises that appealed to the voters in the autumn of 1989, when Jordan faced a very different set of priorities from the one it does today. Now the MPs have to go back to their constituents and ask to be reelected. If things work as they should, a whole series of forces in society should assess whether or not the MPs carried out the promises of autumn 1989. Ideally, these forces should include the voters, candidates challenging incumbents, the new political parties, the press, special interest groups (women, students, environmentalists, religious folk, etc.), professionals and intellectuals, business associations, men and women of culture and the arts, and virtually everyone else in society with the exception of the armed forces and the structures of the state (which are deemed outside the political arena).

The voters are smart, and for the first time in a long time they are going to have the opportunity to exercise their political intelligence. They know what they want and need, and they also know a cheap politician when they run into one.

The novelty of political parties will not hide the deficiencies of those MPs who shall be judged by the voters to have been charlatans and failures, and MPs who accurately reflected their constituents' sentiments and needs will be sent back to Parliament once again with a renewed mandate.

The Islamists will be the most hard-pressed to maintain their support among the public, because they will no longer enjoy the near monopoly on political organisation that they exploited so well in 1989.

The Islamist vote may go up or down slightly, depending on a range of factors that will influence voters' opinions. But this is not the key issue this year, despite the strange insistence of Western media and officials to focus on it. The more important long-term media to look for this year is the extent to which the new parties can develop into credible vehicles of political organisation.

If we are to make a viable transformation from a society of men into a society of men and women and laws, the political parties will be one of the first areas to look for signs of change and progress. Unfortunately, the parties, as they are now defined, are such freaks in our society that they may not prove the most appropriate vehicles for political transformation and rebirth.

I call them freaks because they are essentially Western imports that have no ideological or procedural roots in our society, and they are further encumbered by the strict constraints set by the government. Some of them already suffer from their rather funny birth at the hands of the Ministry of Interior; a few that were initially banned were subsequently approved when they made some superficial and probably meaningless changes in their constitutions, causing serious doubts about the nature and meaning of this transparent political game.

These are serious flaws in our democratisation process, but they should not be exaggerated. The scope, intent and direction of our political transformation remain valid, even relevant and important, in a regional context.

Unlike Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia, Lebanon, and other grievous Arab lands, our democratisation and liberalisation endure, even though gradually, and they are unencumbered by heavy-handed militarism and violence, and are only slightly distorted by some of our tired old mid-century men.

We have completed the easy part. Now we embark on the more difficult triple challenge of attempting to institutionalise: a pluralism, b - public participation, and, c - accountability, within a distinctly Jordanian/Arab/Islamic/Semitic context and in a manner that is credible to our people.

No Arab society has ever done this during this century — which makes our flaws seem manageable, our mini-patriarchies rather cute, our mid-century hangover endurable, and our ambitions eminently sensible.

© RAMI G. KHOURI

Free the 'other' half

LAST WEEK'S world-wide commemoration of International Women's Day has illicitly only a few kind words in the newspapers but, unfortunately, no concrete action to improve the status of women. Efforts by individuals are by no means insignificant, if only as reminders of what has to be done, but they are ineffective. The truth that many should recognise before they undertake the task of promoting and advocating women's rights in the Kingdom is that women, contrary to common rhetoric, do not really make up half of the society. Until today and despite great strides by a few of the women in society continues to be marginal. Women have been excluded, or have excluded themselves, from all forms of the decision-making process in the society. They do not decide for their small families, nor for their communities nor for the country at large. Women are missing from every single level of decision-making in the country. Jordan is run by men with very little regard for how the decisions that are being taken affect the other "half of society" whom men claim to recognise and respect. The legal system, more than any other party, has contributed to the institutionalisation of the mentality of the "women as half human beings." "Women are being killed by their male relatives over the issue of "honour" and magistrates commute sentences of the offenders accepting women's "honour" as a reason for murder. This only deepens the concept that honour has only to do with the behaviour of women and not that of men who, being the decision-makers, squander the wealth of the nation or bring it defeat. We cannot afford to go into the twenty first century while our laws still allow a man to divorce his wife on a whim while forcing her through a long and humiliating process before she can make a choice to part from a man. The law on passports, for example, requires adult women to obtain the permission of their fathers or husbands before they can receive what is their natural right as Jordanians, a document of citizenship. No one, therefore, can claim that women make up half of society when we still have all these backward and patriarchal laws of overblown male egos. Notwithstanding the fact that Jordan is one of the most advanced societies in the region, we cannot claim to be the guardians of human rights and champions of democracy in the region when half of the population continues to trail behind men who are too insecure to share. Before women are criticised for not moving to earn their rights, the state should ensure these rights exist in the country's legal system. Only then will desperate women, who have been caught up in a triangle of "tradition", "honour" and the "gavel" be able to claim that they have the rights that they want to exercise.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE PROGRAMMED escalation against Iran and Sudan brings back to mind the fiery campaign which targeted Iraq and mobilised the Western public opinion against Baghdad in the days before the Gulf war. Al Ra'i Arabic daily said in an editorial. The newspaper said that despite the fact that Iran aided with the U.S.-led alliance during the confrontation between Iraq and the alliance led by "the great Satan", and despite Iran's participation in blockading Iraq and its refusal to return Iraqi civil and military aircraft sent to it during the war, the Westerners did not appreciate Iran's role which enabled them to strike at Iraq and to continue their blockade imposed since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990. The Western countries, it said, are now wailing their campaign against Iran because it is a Muslim country and because its citizens are Muslims and because it is aiming to control its capabilities and wealth. One of the most repeated charges by the West against Iran is that it hosts terrorist groups and supports terrorism. It added, Al Ra'i said such a charge does not give any importance to Iran's role in weaving conspiracies against Iraq for Washington, London, Paris or the rest of the malicious Western states. Iran, the newspaper continued, is now required to realise that there is no way to confront this conspiracy and to abort it except by returning to Islam, which is the target of its enemies, and to return to the ranks of the Muslim nation, which is being described by the West as a "barbaric, backward and terrorist nation". The only way for Iran to do this is to forsake the circle of conspiracy against Iraq and to commit the Iranians to the teachings of Islam which prohibits hedging the blood of a Muslim by another Muslim, prevents a Muslim nation from starving other Muslims, and considers the whole nation as one body. The newspaper said. The only way for Iran to come out of this stalemate is to meet with Baghdad on the basis of Islam and its teachings rather than the United Nations Charter. Otherwise Iran is destined to be the target of a new racist Operation Desert Storm," the paper said.

Al Dustour Arabic daily dealt in its editorial with the Jordanian-Arabian meetings which were held in Amman in the past few days to coordinate the stands of both sides at the peace talks. The newspaper said the talks had showed the closeness of relations between the political leaderships of the two peoples. It said the continuation of coordination between the two sides in the past has been an element of strength for both sides in their "battle on the front of the peace process", especially that they are participating in the peace talks in a joint delegation. Al Dustour voiced its concern over the close Jordanian-Palestinian relations and the continued coordination between the two sides, but it expressed relief that the basis of coordination should be expanded to include all the Arab parties to the peace talks to strengthen their position in the Arab-Israeli negotiations.

U.S. foreign policy

Do Americans know what it is?

By Walter R. Mears
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For President Bill Clinton, blurred lines in foreign policy could create a mirror image of the troubles George Bush faced over a vague domestic programme.

On problems at home, the Clinton message is drawn sharply and repeated regularly. Not so on matters abroad, although overseas issues are high on his agenda, and a summit is on his schedule.

Mr. Bush concentrated on foreign policy, said he preferred it, and paid the penalty when he lost reelection in a campaign dominated by domestic economic concerns.

Mr. Clinton said he would keep a laser like focus on the economy, but would not ignore international problems which, untended, could worsen and demand full time attention.

He's done both, but the kind of attention and explanation that can build policy support has been dedicated to his economic programme so his call for new high income and energy taxes is familiar at home; his guarded policy on the possible use of U.S. troops in an international force in Bosnia is not so widely understood.

After conferring with French President Francois Mitterrand Tuesday, Mr. Clinton said he had "restated the position of the administration, which is now well known in the public," on the possibility of sending U.S. troops to join an international force if

there is a diplomatic settlement in what was Yugoslavia.

Mr. Clinton said that position is that the United States will not use troops in the civil conflict in Bosnia, but would be interested in joining a United Nations force to help guarantee a peace agreement if there is one.

To gain support for a military mission as controversial as that surely would be, the administration will need to convince Americans that it is in the national interest, and that there's a way out as well as compelling reason to go in.

Candidate Clinton had said he would use air power against Serbian forces besieging Bosnian Muslims; as president his policy has been more cautious than that, but more assertive than that of the Bush administration.

Mr. Clinton now is seeking to tighten the economic embargo against Serbia to inflict more of a price for Serb aggression.

The United States is dropping food and medical supplies into eastern Bosnia, a humanitarian effort that continues after initial mixed messages from the administration itself.

Secretary of Defence Les Aspin had said the initial drops achieved a "symbolic goal" by showing the Serbs they should stop blocking U.N. relief convoys, and the operation was being suspended. A day later, Mr. Clinton said the air drops would continue as planned. Mr. Aspin said he'd been misunderstood.

Mr. Clinton is working to gain support for his effort to increase

U.S. and allied aid to Russia, saying it is essential to prevent economic and democratic reforms there from foundering. He said the United States should be willing to spend a tiny fraction of what it cost for cold war defence in an effort to preserve democracy in a former Communist foe.

The administration will seek about \$700 million in technical assistance for Russia and other former Soviet republics, and increase from \$417 million that was in the budget. President Clinton also plans to recommend Russian debt relief and steps to make it easier for that government to borrow from international lending institutions.

Detailed proposals are due before his scheduled summit meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Vancouver, April 3 and 4.

Mr. Yeltsin is struggling to hold his powers and continue his market reforms; Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Thursday the administration will continue to support him, and hopes his position will be strengthened.

But foreign aid always is a hard sell, doubly so as the administration seeks tax increases and cuts in domestic spending. At a White House briefing on foreign policy, a question made the connection:

Would new taxes go into increased aid?

"No new taxes are being requested for assistance to Russia," the answer came. Even the question pointed up the problem.

North Korean nuclear impasse

A crisis in the making

By Kelly Smith Tunney
The Associated Press

SEOUL — North Korea's surprise decision to withdraw from the nuclear control treaty, rejecting nuclear inspections, may spin into a new crisis in the Korean.

It heightens suspicions from the international community that North Korea has a nuclear weapons programme and may already have material for a nuclear warhead, despite Pyongyang's denials.

The withdrawal is a major setback in the painstaking process of gaining compliance with the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, as well as a defeat for moderates on both sides of the border who supported historic peace pacts.

"This is a serious challenge. ... It will have a grave impact on the credibility of all existing accords between South and North Korea," warned South Korean information minister Oh In Hwan.

Long-time observers see three possible explanations for North Korea's decision. It has a nuclear weapons programme and doesn't want to show it, it is using the

threat of nuclear weapons to gain leverage in future negotiations, or it is trying to cover up internal problems.

"Whatever the reason, this is a major setback for Korean relations," said William J. Taylor, Jr., of the Washington based Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Following the required three month waiting period for the withdrawal to take effect, North Korea will no longer be obligated to inspections by the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency. That means there would be no vehicle to demand compliance for inspections or to resolve suspicions that an unpredictable Stalinist nation with 1.1 million troops is developing a nuclear arsenal.

The jitters were palpable immediately in South Korea.

The new South Korean government, which only this week made its first peace offerings to reopen dialogue, issued a statement late Friday warning North Korea it is fully prepared to deal with military provocations.

"North Korea will be held solely responsible for the consequent

rise in South-North tension and probable international sanctions," the information minister said after an emergency cabinet meeting.

The South had made resolution of nuclear disputes the major condition for easing tensions with the North.

Swedish Foreign Minister Margaretha Af Ugglas, visiting Seoul, said the South Korean officials she spoke to Friday expressed "considerable concern and anxiety" over the North Korean decision.

Further aggravating concerns was the timing, the new administrations in Seoul and Washington had only just begun to fully review their joint strategic policies towards North Korea.

In addition, controversial U.S. South Korean war games which end Thursday are under way in South Korea, and more than 1.5 million troops on both sides of the border are on full alert.

The United States has deployed an intimidating array of weaponry for the games, some of it for the first time in Asia.

M. KAHIL



Salvaging the peace process

A responsibility for all

By Dr. As'ad Abdul Rahman

LAST MONDAY morning a disgruntled and totally disappointed Palestinian youth stabbed to death two Israelis and wounded eight others in a busy street of Tel Aviv. A state of pandemonium soon wrapped the crowded Jewish city and mobs took to the streets calling for vengeance and death to Arabs. The Gaza youth barely escaped death by the angry hooligans, as usually was the case, with similar and previous incidents.

Hysterical calls, especially among the Ultra-Right and extremely Fascist segments of Israeli society, urged Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to deport more Palestinians and to seal off completely the Israel of 1948 from the rest of the occupied territories, along the Green Line separating them. On Tuesday, the Gaza Strip was completely cut off from the rest of the world. Barbaric and inhuman as this act may seem to Westerners, and despite the harsh punishment and pain it will no doubt bring with it, a state of euphoria and admiration were not hard to discern among the inhabitants of the occupied territories.

According to human rights organisations, Israeli and various U.N. reports included, the government of Yitzhak Rabin surpassed the notorious Likud governments in its atrocities against Palestinians. An increase of 20 per cent in the acts of killings against Palestinians were noted in the first six months during the "moderate" Rabin government as compared to the last six months of the maximalist Likud government.

The number of mortalities among Palestinian children also multiplied many fold. Human rights violations in the occupied territories, such as solitary detention, torture, collective punishment, expulsion, and demolition of houses by anti-tank rockets, became widespread practices.

What was really surprising is that such measures were met by almost complete approval by the Israelis. We note here and with deep sorrow that well over 90 per cent of Israelis approved Rabin's government expulsion of the 400 plus Palestinians to southern Lebanon. Such were the ill feelings and practices against Arabs that when the disgruntled Gaza youth took to the street in the rampage of killings, his act — let us admit — echoed a sigh of relief and admiration that was easy to detect in the occupied territories and the Arab World at large.

How and when will this cycle of violence and counter violence end?

To answer such a central question, a few facts must be noted. First, the act of the totally disillusioned and disgruntled Gaza is not the first of its kind. Second, taking into consideration the Israelis' present high level of human rights abuses, it will probably not be the last. Third, the vicious circle of violence and counter violence will probably tend to divide the Palestinian/Arab and Israeli/Zionist views even further.

Fourth, the continuation of the status-quo will probably exacerbate the situation even further. Fifth, such developments take place amidst the dilemma of the expellees which was close to being solved. Its solution would have no doubt helped smooth out yet another problem created by the intransigent position taken by the Israeli delegation during the seventh and eighth rounds of peace talks. Sixth, the expulsion of the 400 plus Palestinians and the international pressure it generated persuaded Israel that it has to abide by the limits of its power.

For the first time in its history, Israel is forced to implement a U.N. resolution (799), albeit gradually and by instalments.

The reaction of the Rabin government to the Tel Aviv operation was characterised by clear

relative "moderation" — something not expected from this same Israeli government. Mr. Rabin himself, in an unprecedented moderate tone, declared that the cut off of the Gaza Strip "will not last for long and will be over after evaluating the security measures currently in force".

The Israeli reaction is by far less sanguine than the reaction of the same government after the assassination of Corporal Toledano, when — among several other harsh measures — 400 plus Palestinians were deported as a punitive response.

Seventh, both Mr. Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat are in a tight position. There are forces to their right that pose serious limitations to their political manoeuvrability. Although Mr. Rabin is more comfortably positioned to give substantial land "concessions", as such concessions will seem in conformity with international law and various U.N. resolutions, the case with Chairman Arafat is quite the opposite. The latter has already made major real concessions.

Eighth, it should be known that the closer the Rabin government adheres to the Biblical claims of the Likud, the longer the vicious circle of violence and counter violence will continue. Ninth, an increasing number of observers and political analysts believe that if the present opportunity to conclude a peace treaty between the Arabs and Israelis is allowed to slip away, the whole area will witness a surge of violence and counter violence on a scale never known before.

To avert this terrifying possibility, all parties concerned, and the international community — particularly the USA and the EEC countries — shoulder special responsibility.

The writer, a member of the Palestine National Council, occasionally writes for the Jordan Times

Clinton sees real chance for talks

(Continued from page 1)

Lebanon but the principle of no more expulsions must be clearly established.

Other points under discussion are a promise to speed up the return of the exiles, agreement to allow the return of other Palestinians expelled since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, and a set of measures to ease restrictions on Palestinians living under occupation.

The six-point plan also seeks from the U.S. statements of policy crucial to the Palestinians. One is an assurance that U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, which demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories in return for peace, cover East Jerusalem.

The other is a declaration that expulsions are illegal.

In Marj Al Zuhour, Lebanon, Palestinian expellees accused Mr. Clinton of supporting Israeli "terrorist policies" but said he had no choice but to push Israel to take them all back immediately.

Abdul Aziz Rantisi, leader of the 396 exiles, said Mr. Clinton

was to try to help Mr. Rabin when they meet in Washington Monday.

"Clinton will strive to save Rabin and pull him out of his predicament but he has no other way but to solve the (expellee) crisis," Dr. Rantisi said at their makeshift camp in South Lebanon.

"They will try to think up a way out of the dilemma which they fell into. We demand that America and Clinton implement U.N. Resolution 799... so they do not lose their credibility."

"Clinton totally backs up the terrorist policy followed by the Zionist government occupying Palestine," said Dr. Rantisi, adding a U.S.-Israeli plan last month to take back immediately about 100 of the exiles was a bid to evade Resolution 799.

"I stress to Clinton he has to understand that the U.S.-Israeli deal has been buried," added Dr. Rantisi. The exiles insist they will only go home together.

An official Syrian newspaper said Sunday Mr. Christopher last month pledged to resolve the crisis before the resumption of peace talks.

Motorist kills two settlers in W. Bank

(Continued from page 1)

mo Haber from New York, suffered wounds in the back and lung and was listed in moderate condition in a hospital in Afula.

Haber immigrated to Israel a month ago, she added.

The Palestinian knife, in his early 20s, was beaten by Israeli bystanders, an eyewitness said.

However, several Israelis including legislator Gonen Segev from the right-wing Tsomet Party, rescued the assailant and turned him over to police.

In the Golan Heights, an Israeli shot at two Arabs from the Druze religious sect, saying he thought they intended to attack him, police reports said. One of the men was seriously wounded but the second escaped injury.

Police reports described the Israeli assailant as either drunk or deranged.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal said he had feared just such incidents after Police Commissioner Yaacov Turner recommended that Israelis carry arms. Mr. Shahal said he worried "carrying arms would be translated into

using them."

Meanwhile, a headline Palestinian faction claimed Monday that its activists had kidnapped and killed an Israeli soldier near Tel Aviv last week.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) said in a statement that the attack was "in retaliation for Israeli crimes committed daily against the Palestinian people."

It cited Israel's failure to repatriate nearly 400 Palestinians expelled to Lebanon Dec. 17 as another motive and warned: "Our fighters are able to penetrate deeply into the Zionist enemy."

The statement gave no details of the incident. But the PFLP-GC apparently was referring to Yehoshua Friedberg, a 24-year-old Israeli soldier who went missing March 7.

Friedberg's body was found Friday and the Israeli police said he had been shot at least three times and his gun was missing. But they did not link his murder to the escalating violence in the occupied territories.

Palestinians may ask for boycott of talks

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinians from the occupied territories.

In addition, Mr. Najjab said in a statement faxed to the Jordan Times, Israel should also commit itself to implementing U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories in return for peace.

Gen. Aideded told conference delegates that the UNITAF force had been welcomed by the Somali people but had begun to lose popular support by their actions.

"As a result of UNITAF's behaviour, the attitude of the Somali people has gone from positive to negative," Mr. Awaale quoted Gen. Aideded as saying.

Gen. Aideded's comments reflect a marked change of atmosphere recently on the streets of the bombed-out capital Mogadishu, culminating in an anti-American demonstration some three weeks ago during which several Somalis were shot dead.

Gen. Aideded, whose bloody feud with Mr. Ali Mahdi wrecked the city and left thousands dead or maimed, called for regional administrations as a first step towards reconstituting a central government.

In a hard-hitting speech at the closed-door meeting, Gen. Aideded blamed the lack of a central government for what he called his country's humiliation.

Somali peace conference launched

(Continued from page 1)

mechanism by which peace, law and order, and public services can be provided.

"We don't think there is need for a transitional government," he said in an interview Sunday.

Observers say Gen. Aideded, whose power base lies in the south, would see his power diluted if he accepted a national administration.

The United Nations and the countries that pledged \$142 million over the weekend to help feed and rebuild Somalia this year have told the factions that aid and relief work might be cut if the talks fail.

Gen. Aideded accused the U.S.-led intervention force Monday of going beyond its mandate and humiliating the Somali people.

Gen. Aideded accused troops of the United Nations Task Force (UNITAF) of breaking into homes and ejecting the occupants on the excuse of looking for weapons.

In a hard-hitting speech at the closed-door meeting, Gen. Aideded blamed the lack of a central government for what he called his country's humiliation.

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Queen says tourism should be used to promote human understanding

By Munib Toukan

BERLIN — IN a lengthy programme entitled "The Queen Who Broke The Embargo!" Deutsche Welle, with great success, depicted Jordan as a haven of democracy, tranquility and the cradle of history.

Her Majesty Queen Noor, on a lightning trip to Germany, addressed the International Tourism Bourse (ITB) in Berlin, emphasising that the Middle East "has been an international crossroads and a meeting point of humanity since the dawn of history!"

"We crowned our meeting with the presence of Her Majesty, and we hope we will support her endeavours to achieve the goals of Jordan under the wise leadership of His Majesty King Hussein," commented German Federal Minister of Economics Guntar Rexford.

In effect, the Queen told an audience of 5,000 people representing 167 countries, that in a context of peace and stability, tourism in the Middle East "promises to expand briskly as it is a long-term growth market for the international travel industry and an increasingly important source of jobs and income for the people of the region."

Queen Noor urged the usage of tourism "to promote human understanding and tolerance worldwide." At the end of the speech, Queen Noor urged the participating travel professionals to "make the business of travel and tourism a bedrock of interna-

tional understanding, tolerance and peace."

"She was fantastic," commented Antonio Savignac, the secretary general of the World Tourism Organisation.

"By her presence she has elevated all countries on the touristic map. A great support to tourism," he added.

Later, Queen Noor addressed the Berlin branch of the Society for Foreign Policy. Speaking of the establishment of Israel in 1948 and what has resulted in its wake, Her Majesty drew a correlation between Western Europe and the Arab World in the dispersal of people, militarism, political tensions and economic stress.

Throughout, Jordan reacted to the challenges "by focusing intensely on human development as the long-term antidote to our prevailing pressures," she said, adding that Jordan developed a "more responsive political system based on the principles of democracy and universal human rights."

In her speech, Queen Noor was critical of the double standards adopted by Western countries when dealing with democratic values. But in her closing remarks, the Queen called on all to "summon the will to work together for the noble values and the realistic human goals that we share," for they will be the legacy of future generations.

During the flash visit to Berlin, as well as to Hannover, with several interviews and



Her Majesty Queen Noor: The Middle East has been a meeting point at humanity since the dawn at history.

lectures. Her Majesty was accompanied by the Minister of Tourism Yanal Hikmat, Royal Jordanian President/CEO Mohammad Jamal Balqez, Senator Laila Sharaf and Minister of Tourism Secretary General Nasri Attalah.

Observers believe that although Her Majesty's trip

was extremely demanding, the valuable successes achieved, warrant further appearances of this sort.

As Die Welt commented, the visit "was timely, much needed and simply majestic."

The writer is the RJ vice-president for public relations

In South Africa

Censor's pen mightier than the word

By David Tucker

Reuter

JOHANNESBURG — God frequently falls victim to the censor's pen in South Africa.

But the F-word just as frequently escapes scrutiny because it's felt to be the way people speak these days.

White women's nipples too are acceptable fare for a nation where a few years ago the only bare breasts on show were those in "tribal events."

But public hair is still a problem because, in the words of Braam Coetzee, South Africa's director of publications, "it is a more sensitive area than bare nipples."

"Bad language is more acceptable than blasphemy," said Mr. Coetzee, who says most complaints he receives come from Christian fundamentalists.

"We don't allow blasphemy or the vain use of the Lord's name," he said. "After all, 77 per cent of the population is Christian."

"We are trying to strike a reasonable balance between what an ultra-conservative and an ultra-liberal person might think," said Mr. Coetzee, overlord of a

task force of censors drawn from all sectors of South African society.

Mr. Coetzee said a recent advertisement for people to work as part-time censors met with an overwhelming response from citizens keen to carry out their civic duty.

Puritanism was not responsible for the avalanche of applications which were being carefully sifted, he said.

Officials say the task force is open to and representative of all South Africa's diverse communities.

Actor Clint Eastwood's frequent use of the word "god-damned" in the recent screening of a Dirty Harry film met with the censor's displeasure recently but only "God" was cut.

"If a criminal or a gangster was using swear words we would probably leave it if it was considered necessary for the development of a plot or theme," said Mr. Coetzee.

"There has been a big increase in the F-word for instance, it has become more acceptable within society."

"It's an unfortunate fact that some people speak that way."

"Mr. Coetzee said nudity too had to be considered in context."

"There has been a considerable relaxation in public attitudes to nudity here. We even have nude beaches and nudity is acceptable in films as long as its portrayal is not licentious," he said.

There were more restrictions on magazines than films, he said. Bare nipples were acceptable in the printed medium but pudenda were not.

Claudia Bossard, editor of South Africa's Penthouse magazine, mild by Western standards but at the cutting edge of soft porn here, said a lack of firm guidelines made life difficult.

"We had an issue banned because a model 'was looking invitingly at the camera,'" said Ms. Bossard, adding that the ban was revoked on appeal.

"We find ourselves in the business of self-censorship, but we push the parameters at times," she said, adding that her magazine had talked to church leaders worried that its contents might harm public morals.

"Our advice to our members is not to look at these things and to obey the Lord's commandments... it's the government's responsibility to protect us from something like pornography."

However, she said most people were not offended.

"We get letters from people saying they prefer our girls semi-clothed. They don't want them totally naked," she said.

Professor Sybrand Strauss of the mainstream Dutch Reformed Church said he would like to see Penthouse, bad language and screen nudity outlawed in South Africa.

"There is no doubt South Africa has become very permissive. I am thankful that when I was a young man such things were not available," said 45-year-old Strauss.

"We would like the government to be the moral guardian of the nation and because the authorities are in the service of the Lord they are bound by his laws," said the professor, whose group claims three million South Africans as members.

"Our advice to our members is not to look at these things and to obey the Lord's commandments... it's the government's responsibility to protect us from something like pornography."

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Jordan Times'

JORDAN MARKET PLACE

Patrick McEnroe upsets Ivanisevic

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida (R) — Patrick McEnroe, who frequently walks in the shadow of his superstar brother John, pulled off Sunday's major upset at the \$3 million Lipton Championships with a 6-3, 6-3 second-round win over sixth seed Goran Ivanisevic.

Elsewhere, second-seeded Steffi Graf of Germany and fourth-seeded Jennifer Capriati of the United States walked through second-round matches on a blustery, chilly day, while tennis idol Jimmy Connors stumbled in the first round.

The second-ranked Graf easily defeated the 88th-ranked Chanda Rubin of the United States 6-2, 6-1 in 45 minutes, sixth-ranked Capriati needed 55 minutes to defeat 63rd-ranked Ines Gorrochategui of Argentina 6-1, 6-0.

Conditions were not ideal for Connors. The swirling wind didn't favour the 40-year-old American's style of play, giving little-known Swede David Engel a 6-3, 6-3 win and something to tell his future children and grandchildren about.

"I think he's the greatest player of all time," enthused the 167th-ranked Engel. "I think it was an honour."

Second-seeded Pete Sampras posted a 6-3, 6-4 second-round win over fellow American Todd Martin.

Ivanisevic went out against McEnroe knowing he is struggling these days.

The sixth-ranked Croatian, a player with immense talent but questionable mental fortitude at times, is not in peak physical form — a result of a stress fracture in his right foot that forced him to withdraw from January's Australian Open. He didn't play again until Rotterdam three weeks ago.

"I'm really struggling very badly," admitted Ivanisevic, a 1991 Wimbledon finalist. "I have to beat somebody. It doesn't matter who, just anybody."

McEnroe ranked 180th, was not interested in being Ivanisevic's sacrificial lamb. Ranked 31st in October 1991, McEnroe, a noted doubles competitor, is looking to resurrect his singles career.

"I'm certainly happy to get a win like that," said McEnroe. "I know Goran's not at his best, but I certainly believe I had something to do with that."



Even with seasoned stars like James Worthy (right) playing, the Lakers lost 117-107 to the Atlanta Hawks.

Pistons beat Bulls, Charlotte win in Boston

DETROIT (R) — Michael Jordan is usually the star of any show he appears in but Sunday was definitely Joe Dumars' day in Detroit.

Dumars scored 27 points, including the 10,000th of his career, and his Pistons held Jordan scoreless for the last nine minutes of the game as Detroit beat the Chicago Bulls 101-99 to snap a five-game losing streak.

Alvin Robertson made a jump shot and free throw in the final 2:44 for Detroit while Jordan and Scottie Pippen missed jumpers in the final 40 seconds that could have given the Bulls the lead.

In Boston, Alonzo Mourning had 25 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Charlotte Hornets to their first-ever win at the Boston Garden, a 96-93 triumph over the Celtics.

Robert Parish had 21 points and 13 rebounds and Kevin Gamble scored 20 for the Celtics, who have lost two in a row after winning seven of their previous eight.

Muggsy Bogues had 14 points, 10 assists and six of Charlotte's 14 steals.

In New York, John Starks had 31 points and 10 assists and Patrick Ewing netted 29 as the Knicks extended their winning streak to six games with a 121-90 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

In Orlando, Shawn Kemp had 27 points and 12 rebounds as the Seattle SuperSonics salvaged the finale of their five-game road trip with a 105-97 victory over the Magic.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 29 points for the Magic, who lost for the fifth time in their last seven games. Nick Anderson added 26 for Orlando.

At Minnesota, Ron Harper scored 25 points and Stanley Roberts added 20 as the Los Angeles Clippers continued their dominance over the Timberwolves with a 124-107 victory in the second game of their home-and-home series.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
AND TAMARA HIRSCH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠A65 ♣10954 ♠AJ ♠654
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
Pass Pass 1♣ Pass
Pass Pass Dbl

What action do you take?
A.—You have to tell partner that, even if he has opened light in third seat, the hand belongs to you. The only way to convey that information is for you to redouble. You have safety because partner would not have passed your response without at least three-card heart support.

Q.2—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠73 ♣KQJ10862 ♠AS ♠J6
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1♣ Pass 1♠ Pass

What do you bid now?
A.—You have a very fine heart suit and a hand rich in playing tricks, but the fact you don't hold a singleton anywhere adds "temper your optimism. A rebid of 2♥ hearts is quite ample for the moment.

Q.3—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠KJ6 ♣QJ10 ♠AQ843 ♠94
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♠ Pass ?

What do you bid now?
A.—Since it's most unlikely that you have an eight-card major suit fit, there's no point to responding one diamond now—your most probable game is three no trump.

Tell partner of your good, balanced hand by jumping to two no trump.

Q.4—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠762 ♣AQ8 ♠95 ♠AQJ83
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1♠ Pass 1♠ Pass

What action do you take?
A.—Preempts are designed to make life miserable for the opponents, and this one has succeeded admirably. We are going to bid four spades, knowing full well that, if the opponents do not double, we could end up in a completely unworkable contract. Naturally, if doubled we will beat a hasty retreat to five diamonds.

Q.5—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠J8762 ♣J ♠KQ8 ♠A1073
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♠ Pass 1♠ Pass

What action do you take?
A.—Preempts are designed to make life miserable for the opponents, and this one has succeeded admirably. We are going to bid four spades, knowing full well that, if the opponents do not double, we could end up in a completely unworkable contract. Naturally, if doubled we will beat a hasty retreat to five diamonds.

Q.6—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠72 ♣AQ8 ♠K1065 ♠AJ832
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♠ Pass ?

What do you bid now?
A.—If you start with one club, you have no good rebid should partner bid one heart. In accordance with the Principle of Preparedness, we would open one diamond, intending to rebid two clubs over a response of one heart.

Prost wins S. African GP, faces decisive week

KYALAMI, South Africa (R) — Frenchman Alain Prost made a victorious return to Formula One Sunday in an incident-filled South African Grand Prix on his first outing with his new Williams team.

In a race which ended in chaos with thunder, lightning and heavy rain, Prost cruised home one minute and 19 seconds ahead of his nearest rival Brazilian Ayrton Senna in a McLaren.

Prost, a convincing victor for Williams, returns to France this week for a hearing which could decide his and the Formula One World Championship's future.

The 38-year-old Frenchman will face the International Motor Sports Federation's (FISA) World Council in Paris on Thursday to counter charges that he brought the sport into disrepute with alleged criticism of the FISA leadership in a French magazine this year.

If Prost, who plans to play a tape of the original interview he gave to the Auto Plus magazine, is found guilty and suspended, he may, as he threatened Saturday evening, quit the sport.

That would leave his superb South African exhibition behind as his racing epitaph.

If that happened, it would almost certainly make this year's title race invitingly open for Senna, who finished second to Prost in Sunday's stirring race in his McLaren, assuming the Brazilian decides to race on.

But the question which gripped the imagination in the Kyalami paddock was which team will Senna drive with for the rest of



Frenchman Alain Prost at Sunday's South African Formula One Grand Prix (AFP photo)

the year?

On Sunday, Senna was taking part with only a one-race agreement with the McLaren team. And although he has made it clear he hopes to challenge for the championship in the new McLaren MP4/8, he might find the temptation of a possible drive as Prost's replacement at Williams irresistible.

All these possibilities fuelled a lively rumour mill even before Sunday's race, which ended in a thunderstorm with only seven cars classified as finishers.

Prost, back after a year's sabbatical, drove with all his old authority to improve his record career total of Grand Prix wins to 45.

Senna, for all his commitment and bravery, was unable to compete with Prost and after the race blamed an electronic failure in his car's active suspension system for rendering it "undriveable" as he coasted into second position.

"I felt that maybe we could have done something amazing today," said Senna. "But in the end the care gave up on me. Still, in the circumstances, it was great for us."

Senna gave no hint about his future, but the presence of his personal financial manager and accountant at the circuit throughout the weekend suggested he was involved in serious negotiations with McLaren.

For the immediate future of Formula One, it is vital that both Prost and Senna are retained by

Williams and McLaren if the Grand Prix series is to survive the challenge it faces from Indycar Racing following Briton Nigel Mansell's move to the American series.

Mansell, the 1992 F1 world champion, makes his first racing appearance for the Newman-Haas Indycar team next Sunday in Australia.

Prost and Senna dominated the South African Grand Prix weekend from start to finish and left many of their emerging rivals in the shade.

Both Benetton's were forced to retire — German Michael Schumacher after an unwise attempt to find a way past Senna on the inside — and both the newcomers at Williams and McLaren failed to complete the distance in their first Grand Prix with the teams.

Britain's Damon Hill's debut for Williams ended after only 16 laps when he was in a collision with Italian Alessandro Zanardi's Lotus while American Michael Andretti lasted only four laps before a brush with Briton Derek Warwick's footwork tore off his right front wheel.

Of the rest, Ferrari showed some improvement over the weekend with their new active F39A car, but Ligier and new Swiss Sauber team were the most impressive.

Ligier, using ex-Williams automatic transmission and Renault engines, scored their best result for many years with Briton Mark Blundell finishing third. Two places ahead of Finn J.J. Lehto who marked his first race with Sauber by finishing fifth.

Horse Racing

Cherrykino bids to emulate Arkle

LONDON (R) — Thirty years after Arkle first made his name at Cheltenham, the horse's great-nephew lines up in this week's Gold Cup with decent prospects of emulating jump racing's greatest star.

Cherrykino is rated a 14-1 chance with French champion The Fellow, short-head runner-up for the last two years, 7-4 favourite to make it third time lucky in Thursday's great race.

Like Arkle, Cherrykino is owned by the Duchess of Westminster and will carry the same yellow and black "hooper" colours sported when Arkle won his three gold cups in the mid 1960s.

The best of Arkle's surviving relatives, Cherrykino is unproven in the top bracket but goes into battle with the most impressive string of form — six wins in succession and unbeaten for a year.

The duchess also won the Gold Cup with Irish-trained Ten Up in 1975 and the 1985 Grand National with Last Suspect, ridden by Hywel Davies.

Chill reminder of athletics ills at Skydome

TORONTO (R) — It should have been a cosy party, a celebration of athletics to warm the spirit at winter's end.

Instead, the World Indoor Championships provided a cold reminder of some of the ills troubling the sport.

The life of the party was missing as many of the greatest stars stayed home, feeling neither the pull of prestige nor the lure of profit sufficient to draw them into the cavernous Skydome.

Without such luminaries as Sergei Bubka, Carl Lewis, Linford Christie, Mike Powell, Jackie Joyner Kersee, Heike Drechsler, Noureddine Morceli and Merlene Ottey, the three-day championships looked lost in the 55,000-capacity domed stadium against a backdrop of empty blue seats.

Some athletes blamed late withdrawals on injury or illness, though a lack of prize money was an equally plausible diagnosis. Others were more frank.

"It is not important," said 1,500 metres world record holder Morceli before last month's Grand Prix finals in New York



Carl Lewis

when asked why he was not attending.

One notable last-minute absence was due to an all-too-familiar reason. Russian world record setting hurdler Lyudmila Narozhilenko was withdrawn on the opening day over a positive doping test taken just weeks be-

fore she twice lowered the indoor standard for the 60-metre hurdles in Seville.

But as Narozhilenko was leaving, Butch Reynolds was arriving back on the international scene after a two and a half year exile over a disputed doping suspension.

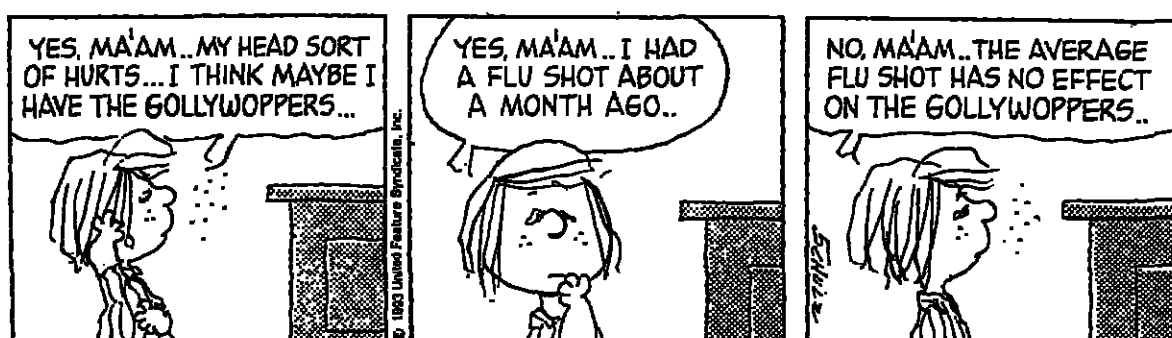
Reynolds, who won a \$27.3 million lawsuit against the International Amateur Athletic Federation in a U.S. court last December, triumphed this time on the track as he seized the gold in the 400 metres.

"This was vindication, it's not any normal gold medal for me," the 28-year-old American world record holder said.

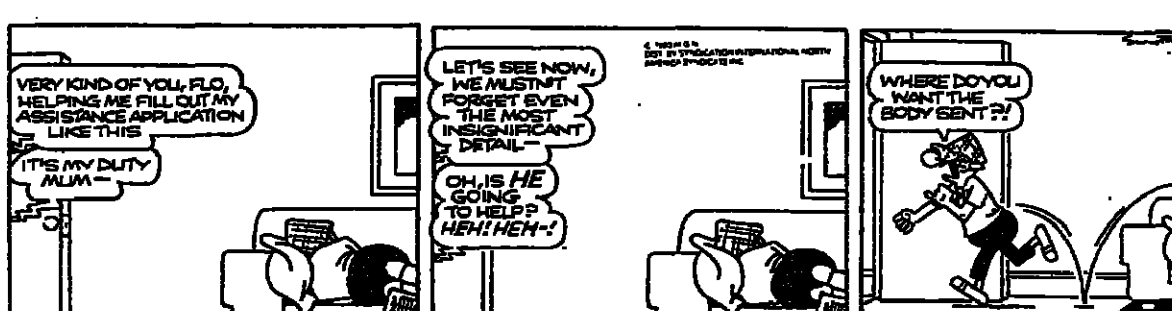
Claiming gold after surviving suspensions was all the rage in Toronto as four other titles were also won by once punished athletes including both hurdle champions, Canadian Mark McKoy and Julie Baumann now of Switzerland.

The level of competition at the championships was uneven, but two world records were set on the final day.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY MARCH 16, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Get rid of all those chores that have to do with home, family, property and possessions. Listen to what kin suggests and go along with their ideas where possible, to build a better future foundation.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Put some attention on improving your holdings by your own personal attention, then you will be able to discuss practical aspects of your future with money experts.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You can consider all aspects of your personal aims and wishes today and make some, real advancement in starting action to make them a part of your life.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You can delight in arranging all the various factors of any plan of action later to be brought into the open to gain your own ambitions.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Seek out acquaintances with similar desires to your own and find out and devise a plan whereby you can work together in more harmonious union of condition and that applies to painting articles as well.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A day when those very civic and credit conditions requiring your attention can be put into motion so you get them out of the way.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Think about those persons you

have recently met who can be the means by which you gain help and a better awareness of your character, growth.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have a good chance this day to find the best ways and means for adding to your assets by consulting with those who are experienced in such.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Matters come to light for you today that require a considerable amount of thought and they are apt to be of a worldly and public nature.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a day to get at all of those practical concerns that are difficult to get in their right niche during the busy days that are ahead.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Whatever hobbies that appeal to you the most can be perfected now so that it can be used in the future to bring you a considerable amount of pleasure.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) On this day to what you have put off in getting your dwelling place in the pink of condition and that applies to painting articles as well.

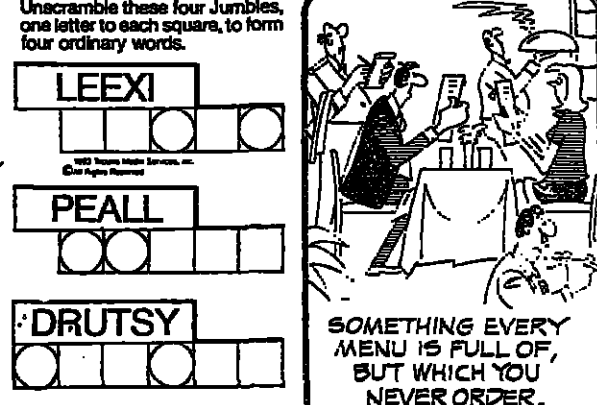
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Communications to and from others should be confined to the gist of whatever earthly interests exist and arrive at sensible, common sense solutions.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

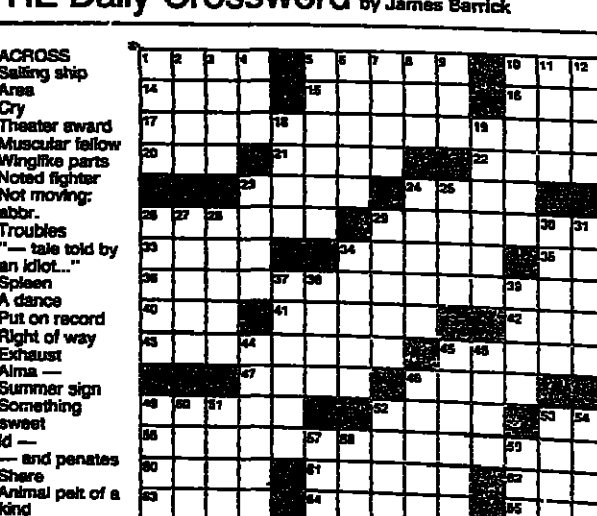


Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____

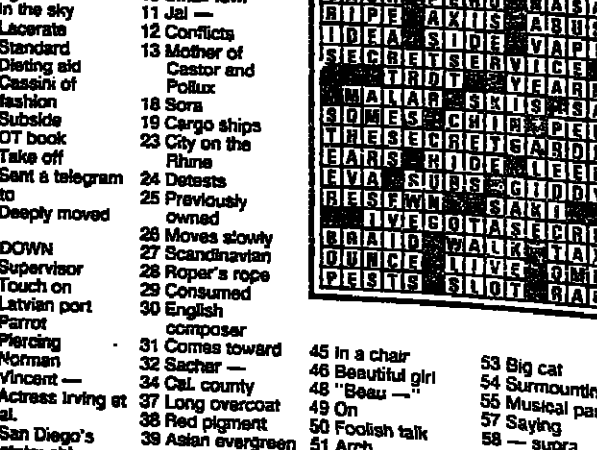
Yesterday's Jumbles: ELATE OWING RAGLAN CORNER
Answer: The dealer in "hot ice" ended up in this —

THE Daily Crossword by James Barrick



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Saturday's Puzzle Saved:



Angry Yeltsin accuses Congress of seeking Communist comeback

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, stung by humiliating rebuffs from Russia's supreme legislature, accused the assembly Monday of seeking to restore Communist rule.

Angered by setbacks to his reform programme last week, he charged that the Congress of People's Deputies was breaking the constitution.

A statement signed by his press spokesman gave no indication of what action was planned by the 62-year-old president, Russia's first democratically-elected leader, beyond saying he would make it known "in the next few days."

But it said: "Numerous appeals are coming to the president from enterprises, social organisations and private citizens in the regions of Russia asking him to defend democracy and stop the Communist restoration."

Mr. Yeltsin's aides have hinted that he might try to impose presidential rule — a risky path that would require military backing — if Congress continued to undermine his power.

The Congress Saturday ended a four-day session during which it rejected virtually all Mr. Yeltsin's proposals and cancelled a planned referendum on whether parliament or president should be supreme in Russia.

Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov portrayed Congress as a bulwark against dictatorship and said the session had been a triumph for stability and democracy in Russia.

Mr. Yeltsin's statement, signed by spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov after meeting the president, said Congress had spurned a deal to end Russia's political crisis in favour of confrontation.

"Having denied the people the right to express its will by a referendum, Congress has embarked on the path of violating the constitution," it said.

"This is an attempt to concentrate power completely in the hands of Soviets (councils), to return the levers of government to the Communist nomenklatura (party elite)."

Mr. Khasbulatov in turn insisted that the Supreme Soviet — the smaller standing parliament chosen from the ranks of Congress — would do no more than pass legislation and monitor observance of the constitution and the law.

"We have no intention of interfering in government," ITAR-TASS News Agency quoted him as telling a visiting Thai princess Monday.

"We are counting on positive developments, that things will get better and the federal government will work effectively."

The power struggle is for many a question of which economic policy the government pursues — Mr. Yeltsin's radical free-market line or a cautious, slow-track approach favoured by parliament.

The crisis has alarmed the West, unsettled financial markets and brought dire predictions of revolution or civil war from some Russian politicians.

Congress — likewise elected democratically, though at a time when the Communist Party was still the dominant political force — voted itself sweeping powers to remove Mr. Yeltsin if he deviated from the constitution.

The president spent Sunday pondering his next move at a country retreat outside Moscow.

He returned Monday to the capital, where he is due to receive French President Francois Mitterrand Tuesday.

Mr. Yeltsin escaped with his powers more or less intact, but with his defences weakened.

He has said he will challenge the ban on a referendum in the constitutional court. In any case he plans to go ahead with a nationwide opinion poll on who should rule the country, though this vote would not be legally binding.

But constitutional court Chairman Valery Zorkin left Monday for a two-week trip to the United States.

Parliament is due to meet this week. It will at some stage debate moves to place media organisations under its own control and consider whether to hold early presidential and parliamentary elections.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Bill Clinton firmly supports Mr. Yeltsin's reform efforts and does not expect challenges to the Russian leader's authority to delay next month's summit, Mr. Clinton's chief spokesman said Sunday.

Mr. Clinton, who has called for more aggressive Western backing for Mr. Yeltsin, plans to hold two days of talks with him on April 3 and 4 in Vancouver, Canada — their first meeting as presidents.

White House Communications Director George Stephanopoulos said he did not expect the current power struggle between Mr. Yeltsin and Russia's conservative Congress would force a change in the timing of the summit.

Asked if there would be a delay in the summit, Mr. Stephanopoulos replied: "I don't think so."

The summit with President Yeltsin is set for April 3rd and 4th and we expect to go."

Mr. Clinton "remains firm in his commitment to help the reform process, to help the process of democratic and economic reforms in Russia," the presidential spokesman said on the CBS programme "Face The Nation."

He stressed that Mr. Clinton "supports President Yeltsin, the only Russian leader in all of Russia's history who was elected in democratic and free elections."

"He continues to support President Yeltsin and the process of reform," Mr. Stephanopoulos said.

Defence Secretary Les Aspin, appearing on NBC's "Meet The Press" programme, said Sunday the United States should be actively cultivating military-to-military contacts with the Russian Armed Forces because regardless of the outcome of the power struggle, "the military's going to be an important part of formulating policy in Russia."

As a result, "I think it's important that we establish relations with them," he said. "And we've done some of that, but I think not nearly enough."

Mr. Aspin said the Clinton administration had not advised Mr. Yeltsin on how to deal with the power struggle. "We have not been asked and we have not volunteered any advice, and I think that's right," he said.

He declined comment when asked about the possibility of U.S. military help for Mr. Yeltsin if the Russian military were to split.

"No chance I'm going to answer that question," he said.

Keating pledges to transform Australia into a republic

SYDNEY (R) — Prime Minister Paul Keating Monday pledged to begin transforming Australia into a republic with Britain's Queen Elizabeth replaced as head of state.

Speaking at his first news conference since crushing the pro-monarchy Liberal-National conservative opposition in an election rout Saturday, Mr. Keating pledged to create a panel of eminent Australians to study how the country could become a republic. With an Australian head of state, by 2001.

This would coincide with the centenary of Australia's conversion from a group of colonies to a federation of states.

"The government has put to the Australian electorate a view that we should be masters of our own destiny — that the embodiment of the country ought to be visited upon an Australian and that this should best happen in the structure of a federal republic," he told reporters.

He promised a national debate and negotiation: "That's going to take some years, probably more than three."

Mr. Keating also foreshadowed a change in the Australian flag, a blue ensign with the southern cross constellation and Britain's Union Jack in the top left-hand corner.

"If Australia decided by referendum to become a republic, we would have, of course, no place whatsoever for the Union Jack in the corner of our flag," Mr. Keating said.

The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper said in a front page commentary Monday: "His (Keating's) win clearly marks the end of the old Australia tied to its British past. Mr. Keating has a mandate for pressing on towards the Australian republic, with a new Asian orientation and new national symbols, and he will."

The queen is Australia's titular head and has the power



Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating speaks at his first press conference in Sydney (AFP photo)

to dismiss any Australian government. Mr. Keating technically rules at the queen's pleasure, answering to her representative, Governor-General Bill Hayden.

That power was tested in 1975 when Governor-General Sir John Kerr dismissed the Labour government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who refused to back down to an obstructionist senate that would not pass his government's budget bills.

The young Keating, a descendant of Irish settlers, had been a minister in the Whitlam government for only a few weeks before it was dissolved.

The day after toppling predecessor Bob Hawke in a party room challenge 14 months ago, Mr. Keating had the Australian flag removed from his official car.

During the queen's visit here last year, Mr. Keating triggered a storm in British newspapers when he put his hand on her waist as he introduced his ministers to her.

Labour's platform calls for a republic, and since winning office in 1983, it has tinkered at the margins.

Advance Australia Fair replaced God Save The Queen as the national anthem, a seven-pointed star replaced the crown in the national crest and British citizens lost their right to vote in Australian elections in 1984.

Mr. Keating has said an oath to Australia for new citizens will replace the current one to the queen.

An opinion poll during the campaign found 88 per cent of Australians supported forming a republic by 2001.

COLUMN

Aspin to get heart pacemaker

WASHINGTON (AP) — The secretary of defence says he'll probably receive a cardiac pacemaker within the next few weeks to help control a heart ailment. "The doctors are recommending it and I'm thinking about it. Probably, yes," Les Aspin said in an interview with the NBC Broadcasting Network. Mr. Aspin, 54, spent five days in Georgetown University Medical Centre last month after complaining of shortness of breath. Mr. Aspin suffers from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a thickening of the heart walls that leads to reduced pumping efficiency. Doctors said the condition was not life threatening but said he needed a pacemaker and recommended he stop playing tennis and squash. Mr. Aspin responded affirmatively when asked whether the operation might take place in the next few weeks.

Zoo lays bare polar bear's mistaken identity

TOKYO (R) — When Yukio (Mr. Snowman) died in Tokyo aged thirty-something, his minders finally confirmed what they had long suspected — the polar bear wasn't a he but a she. Yukio, Japan's oldest polar bear in captivity when it died Monday, came to Tokyo's Ueno Zoo in 1958 as a gift from the Moscow Bolshoi Circus. "The Russians told us then that the bear was about one year old and a male," a zoo spokesman said. "But the way Yukio acted — the way he urinated — made the keepers suspicious," he added. The spokesman said Yukio was a translation of the animal's Russian name.

Thieves sink Russian navy ship to steal parts

MOSCOW (R) — Thieves in the Russian military port of Baltisk sank a navy ship in shallow waters so they could be sure of stealing as many precious metal parts as possible, Commonweath Television reported Sunday. The report, which showed a small destroyer half-submerged in the shallows, said one section of the port was full of wrecks which had been cannibalised by people making fortunes by selling the precious components for hard currency abroad. Baltisk, in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad next to Poland and Lithuania, is closed to the public and the report indicated the sinking has been carried out by naval personnel. A lieutenant told the television crew that a report had been filed with the military prosecutor but no arrests had been made. Corruption is spreading quickly through the armed forces as living standards collapse. Defence Minister Pavel Grachev last month said a large part of the officer corps was sullied with corruption and promised a ruthless crackdown. Earlier this year, an air force general in the Far East was charged with embezzling a fortune after he was caught using his heavy bomber fleet to shuttle wealthy entrepreneurs to China.

Grin and bear it

LONDON (R) — A British skier fought off a bear and wolves during two freezing nights alone on a Romanian mountain after becoming lost on the first day of a skiing holiday, the Sun newspaper reported Monday. The paper said that Rudy Gonsalves, 57, had been forced off the Lupului slope by a snow-flattening machine and careered into a ravine. He used survival techniques learned during conscription in Britain's military forces to dig snow shelters, but had to frighten off the bear and three wolves with his skis before descending the mountain and being rescued by a farmer.

Albania's pill-box headache

TIRANA (R) — Albania wants to get rid of the 30,000 concrete bunkers that litter the country — a testament to the perverse military doctrine of late dictator Enver Hoxha. Mr. Hoxha built the pill-boxes in the 1970s, scattering them willy-nilly throughout this mountainous Balkan country, away from the borders where they would be most useful defensively. Defence Minister Safet Zhulali told reporters Friday he was looking for a partner to help demolish the bunkers. One attempt by an Italian firm to encourage Albanian peasants to grow mushrooms in the domed concrete structures failed, apparently because the peasants won't eat them.

Opposition demands Rao quit over bombings

NEW DELHI (R) — India's parliamentary opposition party accused Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao Monday of a cover-up over a spate of bomb blasts in Bombay which killed 250 people and demanded his resignation.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said Mr. Rao was too busy fighting a national war in his Congress Party to read intelligence reports about the attack days before 13 huge explosions rocked Bombay Friday.

It gave no details of the reports to which it referred.

Meanwhile, experts defused two motorbike bombs, each packed with 20 kilograms of

plastic explosives, in Bombay's crowded gold and diamond bazaar Monday.

"These would have blown up the entire gold and diamond markets," Nandkumar Chowgle, head of the police bomb squad, told reporters.

Police cordoned off the central Bombay markets after being alerted about the two motorbikes parked outside rows of jewellery shops.

The public has been alerted about the danger of unattended motorbikes after police defused a bomb made of Semtex plastic explosive hidden in a compartment of a motor scooter near a busy railway station Sunday.

It had failed to explode Friday. It was not immediately clear if the two motorbike bombs defused Monday had also been planted Friday or subsequently.

Train services over the Bhayander Bridge on the outskirts of Bombay, India's financial centre and main port, were suspended Monday morning after a separate bomb scare. Police said they were checking if there was a bomb on the bridge.

Pakistan said Monday suspicions in India that it might have been behind bomb blasts in Bombay last Friday were "wild and unfounded."

A foreign ministry spokesman

regretted what he called "the reprehensible tendency on the part of Indian politicians to blame Pakistan for every unpleasant event in India."

"Such wild, unfounded and mischievous statements accusing Pakistan of involvement in terrorist activities do not help in solving the problems and adversely affect efforts for establishing tension-free and good neighbourly relations between Pakistan and India," he said.

Indian intelligence agents tracking the bombers said Sunday the trail pointed towards groups in Pakistan.

N. Korea bans foreigners, restricts travel

MOSCOW (R) — North Korea has banned foreigners from entering the country and tightened restrictions on movements of its foreign residents, Russia's ITAR-TASS News Agency said Monday.

"The Foreign Ministry has instructed consular departments abroad to stop issuing any visas for travel to North Korea, including to diplomatic workers," it said in a report from the North Korean capital Pyongyang.

The agency said the decision took effect on March 9 when the

Communist Asian state, once a close ally of Moscow, put its army on high alert after the resumption of joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises.

TASS said the military exercises were regarded as a threat to security by North Korea, which decided last week to withdraw from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty aimed at stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile South Korean President Kim Young-Sam sent a conciliatory message to North

Korea Monday, saying Seoul would not try to isolate or punish Pyongyang for its bombshell rejection of a nuclear arms pact. But the newly-elected South Korean president adopted an economic hard line with the North's Stalinist leadership, halting all moves to resume inter-Korean economic exchanges.

Mr. Kim said the South would not consider economic cooperation with the North until Pyongyang allows inspections of its suspected nuclear weapons sites.

U.S. east coast digs out from worst storm in century that killed 77

NEW YORK (R) — America's battered east coast dug out Monday from the worst storm of the century that killed at least 77 people.

Airports and highways reopened and lights came back on for cities deprived of power in the weekend storm that roared through 20 states.

But millions of people still fought deep-freeze gales and snow.

Authorities said the storm

caused millions of dollars in damage in the New York area alone.

Some news reports put the death toll as high as 104 in the havoc from blinding snow and hurricane-force winds.

With up to three feet (a metre) of snow on the ground, tens of thousands of people stayed in shelters and 12 states retained emergency measures.

"It's not too much to say it's the storm of the century," said

Joe Friday, director of the National Weather Service.

President Bill Clinton vowed to act quickly on states' requests for help. Returning to the White House after a Sunday church service, the president said he called a number of governors to check on their needs.

"I'm going back now to get a situation report from the other states and we'll process them all immediately," he said.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

1 killed in blast at German plant

FRANKFURT (R) — An explosion rocked a factory of the German chemical groups Hoechst AG Monday morning killing one person and injuring at least one other, fire brigade sources said. A Hoechst spokeswoman could not give further details but said the blast took place at a plant that produces a plastic substance called Mowiol. Fire brigade sources said the plant was still on fire at 0745 GMT. Hoechst has reported a series of accidents since Feb. 22, when two tonnes of poisonous chemicals escaped from a plant in western Frankfurt. The surrounding neighbourhood had to be cleaned of the substance in an operation lasting two weeks.

12 killed by bomb in Abkhazia

MOSCOW (R) — Twelve people were killed when a bomb dropped on the capital of Georgia's breakaway Abkhazia region exploded as it was being defused, Russian Television said. It listed the victims as eight Georgian soldiers, three Georgian journalists and an Abkhaz citizen. The Abkhazian capital Sukhumi is in Georgian hands, though most of the Black Sea region on Russia's southern border is controlled by Abkhazian separatists. The report said an SU-25 attack aircraft bombed districts of Sukhumi for 40 minutes Saturday, damaging houses and inflicting casualties. It dropped nine bombs, two of which exploded. The television did not say who controlled the plane. It said a "Georgian television crew accompanied sappers from the Georgian National Guard who went to defuse the unexploded bombs. "As the very first bomb was being defused eight sappers, three journalists and one citizen of Abkhazia were killed. So far, six bombs have still not been defused and could explode at any moment," the television said.

Aspin, Powell open hearing on bases

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defence Secretary Les Aspin says he considered the impact on local economies in recommending base closings that will change the face of the armed forces and affect dozens of communities nationwide. Mr. Aspin and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Colin Powell were testifying Monday before the Defence Base Closure and Realignment Commission, an independent panel with the power to modify the proposed closure list. Mr. Aspin, acting on the suggestions of each service, Friday proposed closing 31 major military installations and realigning or scaling back 135 others. This third round of base closings is part of the process of trimming post cold war military strength to 1.4 million personnel by 1997, down from the Reagan era force of 2.1 million. Navy installations dominated this round of closures, and coastal states such as California, Florida and South Carolina were among the hardest hit.

Freighter sinks off Canada coast

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia (AP) — A freighter sank off Nova Scotia early Monday in the violent winter storm that has wreaked havoc off the eastern seaboard, officials said. The fate of its 33 crew members was not known. The 160 metre (530 feet) Gold Bond Conveyor, which was carrying gypsum ore from Halifax to Tampa, Fla., sank just after midnight, when winds were reported gusting to 80 mph (130 kph) and seas were over 18 metres (60 feet). The ship went down about 105 kilometres southeast of Cape Sable Island. A British vessel and a Canadian aircraft were at the scene at the time of the sinking but it could not be determined if any crew members made it into life rafts, officials said.

U.N. human rights probe blames Salvadorean army

UNITED NATIONS (R) — A U.N. human rights report has accused the Salvadorean Armed Forces and their allies of knowing of, and in some cases ordering, the torture, kidnapping and massacre of thousands of civilians.

Among the cases analysed during the six-month inquiry by a U.N. commission were the killings of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in 1989.

El Salvador's defence and deputy defence ministers among others were accused of ordering the murders because of Jesuit opposition to the government.

The report, made available to

journalists Monday, named military officials implicated in the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980, the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the village of El Mozote in 1981 and the 1980 killing of four American nuns.

It said the country's Supreme Court president impeded several judicial investigations.

The long-awaited report by the "commission on the truth" was part of the El Salvador peace accords signed by the government and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) a year ago that ended the Central American country's civil war.

The conflict lasted 12 years and cost 75,000 lives.

China accuses U.K. of creating disorder in Hong Kong

PEKING (Agencies) — Premier Li Peng Monday angrily accused Britain of trying to destabilise Hong Kong by unilaterally proposing political reforms before the colony is returned to China in 1997.

The plan "is designed to create disorder and to impede the smooth transfer of power, so it is not a question of democracy," Mr. Li said in his annual work report at the opening session of China's legislature.

His monotone reading of the two-hour work report quickly switched to an angry, haranguing tone when he came to the section denouncing Britain. His sharp criticism of the political reform package — he called it "perfidious" — was met with strong applause four times from the nearly 3,000 delegates.

"We're simply disappointed to see this kind of attack turn up in Li Peng's work report," British embassy spokeswoman Janet Rogan said after the speech.

China intensified its verbal attack on the plan proposed in October by the British colonial governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten after he took a first step towards submitting it to the local legislature.

Mr. Patten's move came after efforts to hold formal talks on political reform stumbled over what role Hong Kong officials should play in the decision-

making process. Peking already has threatened to set up a "shadow government" for Hong Kong and to void all business contracts signed by Hong Kong without China's approval. Such moves would undermine the authority of the colonial government before the turnover.

Mr. Li said China sought cooperation instead of confrontation with Britain.

"But the Chinese government will never barter away principles," he said. "The only solution for the British government is to change its course ..."

Ms. Rogan said the British were ready to have talks without preconditions. She said she didn't know whether Mr. Li's remarks would make talks more difficult.

Although Peking has promised Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy after the turnover, the Communist Chinese reject Mr. Patten's political reform package, fearing that democracy in the colony would give ideas to mainland Chinese.

In a scarcely-veiled threat to the United States and France, Premier Li said Monday Peking would be forceful with foreigners who blocked Taiwan's reunification with the mainland.

Washington and Paris have recently sold jet fighters to Taiwan, which Peking considers a break-away province.

The government in Taiwan, established when its Nationalist leaders fled the mainland in 1949 after losing the civil war, still claims to be the legitimate government of all China. It, too, seeks reunification but on its own terms.

Mr. Li, in a keynote speech to open the 17-day National People's Congress, called on Taiwan authorities to establish contact to end decades of hostility.

"The forces both on and off the island advocating the independence of Taiwan have surfaced again, and certain foreign elements have deliberately created obstacles to China's peaceful reunification..." Li said.

"We shall take strong measures, if necessary, to prevent any actions aimed at bringing about the independence of Taiwan and severing it from the motherland," Mr. Li said.

China has closed France's consulate in Guangzhou and frozen projects with French companies in retaliation for the sale of 60 Mirage 2000-5 planes.

But Peking has not moved against Washington, which also sold fighter jets to the island. Washington is considering basing preferential trade terms for China on Peking's performance in human rights, trade access and arms sales.

Mr. Li took a generally conciliatory stance towards the Un-

ited States in his speech, envisioning an end to obstacles to warmer relations. But he insisted Peking's behaviour in the field of human rights was its own business.

"We are resolutely opposed to the use of human rights to interfere with other countries' internal affairs," Mr. Li said to warm applause.

Premier Li, declaring that under the leadership of the Communist Party China would always be a stable "rock in the east," urged the country Monday to have fast economic growth through capitalist-style reforms.

Mr. Li told the National People's Congress that China had to persist in its economic reforms while keeping the country stable.

The four, Soviet-trained engineers carefully followed the political thought of 88-year-old paramount leader Deng Xiaoping during his two-year state-of-the-nation address: Keep the unquestioned political control of the Communist Party and allow the unfettered growth of the economy.

"Social and political stability is the basic prerequisite for smooth progress in reform, opening up and modernisation," he said, adding that maintaining the unquestioned supremacy of the Communist Party was the way to keep society calm.

The hardline premier, blamed by many intellectuals for ordering the army assault on Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, that killed hundreds if not thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators, again defended the Communist Party's decision to crack down.

He also referred to China's upholding of the socialist flag despite the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, something that still concerns China's leaders who are wary of unrest on their border.

The 64-year-old Li, who has carefully navigated the tricky streams of Chinese politics in the past year, is seen as almost certain to win reelection to a new five-year term during this session of parliament.

Two men sure to lose their jobs are President Yang Shangkun and the chairman of parliament, Wan Li.

Their retirements were reported in official media Sunday. Mr. Yang and Mr. Wan are the last two old guard revolutionaries still in top positions. A third stalwart, Vice President Wang Zhen, a member of the so-called "long march" generation of leaders, died Friday.

Mr. Yang is expected to be replaced by Jiang Zemin, who will keep his post as communist Party general secretary.